University of Alberta

From Pig-Keeper to High King:
Initiation and the Aristocratic Hegemony in Lloyd Alexander's *Prydain* Chronicles

by

William Thompson ©

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial
fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Department of English and Film Studies

Edmonton, Alberta
Fall 2004

Library and
Archives Canada

Published Heritage
Branch

395 Wellington Street
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada

Bibliothèque et
Archives Canada

Direction du
Patrimoine de l'édition

395, rue Wellington
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada

Your file Votre référence
ISBN: 0-612-96029-3
Our file Notre référence
ISBN: 0-612-96029-3

The author has granted a non-exclusive license allowing the Library and Archives Canada to reproduce, loan, distribute or sell copies of this thesis in microform, paper or electronic formats.

L'auteur a accordé une licence non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque et Archives Canada de reproduire, prêter, distribuer ou vendre des copies de cette thèse sous la forme de microfiche/film, de reproduction sur papier ou sur format électronique.

The author retains ownership of the copyright in this thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author's permission.

L'auteur conserve la propriété du droit d'auteur qui protège cette thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou aturement reproduits sans son autorisation.

In compliance with the Canadian Privacy Act some supporting forms may have been removed from this thesis.

Conformément à la loi canadienne sur la protection de la vie privée, quelques formulaires secondaires ont été enlevés de cette thèse.

While these forms may be included in the document page count, their removal does not represent any loss of content from the thesis.

Bien que ces formulaires aient inclus dans la pagination, il n'y aura aucun contenu manquant.

Canada

Dedication

For my parents, Anne and Don, and my children, Meredith and Danna.

And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.

And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.

And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.

(*Revelation*. 21. 1-4)

"If this be jest, then it is too bitter for laughter. Nay, it is the last move in a great jeopardy, and for one side or the other it will bring the end of the game." Then he drew Anduril and held it up glittering in the sun. "You shall not be sheathed again until the last battle is fought," he said.

(Tolkien, J. R. R. *Lord of the Rings* 916)

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge some of the many people who helped me bring this project to completion. First I would like to thank the members of my committee, including Dr. Lahoucine Ouzgane, Dr. Chris Gordon-Craig, Dr. David Gay, Dr. Margaret Mackey, as well as Dr. Rodrick McGillis from the University of Calgary who served as external examiner. I would like to say special thanks to professor emeritus Chris Bullock for helping me to begin my work in the field of masculinity studies and for staying with the project as long as he did. I would also like to thank those who served in the position of Graduate Chair in the Department of English over the passed ten years for their patients with my many set-backs, as well as all of the staff and volunteers with Services for Students with Disabilities for help in transcribing printed material into an accessible format. Because of the length of time it took to complete this project, it would be impossible to name all of those who listened and who offered support along the way. I do, however, owe a debt of gratitude to my dear friend Shannon Robertson, who edited the project at several stages, and who offered relentless and unflagging encouragement. Finally, thanks to my family for their love and support, and their belief that I would eventually finish this project.

Table of Contents

Introduction 1

Chapter 1 - Lloyd Alexander: A Literary and Critical Review 11

Chapter 2 - Models of Initiation and the Masculine Context 33

Chapter 3 - The Separation of the Hero 57

Chapter 4 - The Hero and the Sword 88

Chapter 5 - The Encounter with the Feminine 120

Chapter 6 - The Meeting with the Father 144

Chapter 7 - Restoration and Kingship 172

Conclusion 197

Works Cited 201

Introduction

Several re-workings of the traditional hero story have become compelling landmarks in twentieth-century fantasy and beg re-examination in the light of recent scholarship in the field of masculinities studies. Lloyd Alexander's *Prydain* series, J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*, and Ursula K. Le Guin's *Earthsea* quartet re-write the traditional hero into a form that interrogates issues pertinent to masculinity and gender relations. These writers use the form of the hero story, but each represents the figure of the hero in a way that challenges the primacy of the traditional hero of the romance who achieves his goal through violence and aggression.

Of the three writers, Lloyd Alexander clearly represents the heroic in the context of masculinity and gender relations, and although it comes early in his career, the *Prydain* series explores these areas more fully than any of his subsequent books do. The *Prydain* chronicles, a five-part fantasy sequence published in the 1960s, describe the adventures of Taran, the Assistant Pig-Keeper to an oracular pig, who wins through to become high king of Prydain, an imaginary world that resembles the ancient Wales of *The Mabinogion*. At the outset, Taran seems to fit the paradigm of the traditional hero: he has a series of adventures, encounters fabulous forces, slays a monster, becomes the king, and marries a princess. However, closer examination reveals that Alexander uses each adventure, each chronicle in the sequence, to represent a separate stage in Taran's progress. Moreover, each of the five books has Taran encountering both men and women, and constructing himself in relation to other characters and their definitions of both manhood and the heroic, amounting to a range of social relationships which drive the narrative forward in each successive adventure. By examining these texts in the light of Taran's development from pig-keeper to high king, I argue that Taran is a non-traditional hero who defines himself in terms of his relationships with other characters in the series, and who becomes high king in a manner that takes into account both the journey of the traditional hero and concerns that emerge out of masculinity studies.

Heroes of fantasy such as Taran from Alexander's *Prydain* series, Aragorn from Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*, and Arren from Le Guin's *The Farthest Shore* all fit within but form a challenge to the paradigm of the traditional hero story. The traditional hero is a figure that emerges out of myth and folktale, later appearing in the form of the romance and finding innumerable variations in English literature. My examination of the traditional hero in the context of initiatory practice combines approaches from myth criticism, anthropology, religious studies, literary criticism, and masculinity studies as a means of establishing how this figure of English romance becomes a mainstay of mid-twentieth-century children's and all-ages fantasy: myth criticism provides an archetypal structure for examining heroic patterns in both romance and fantasy; anthropology explains how such mythic structures become ritual practice among different cultures; religious studies place this ritual practice in the context of the sacred; literary criticism builds on the structures of myth to interrogate forms such as the romance in relation to heroic fantasy, and more recently, how the perception of these structures in relation to the traditional hero has changed; finally, masculinity studies offer a way to understand myth and ritual practice in terms of masculine experience and place the traditional hero of fantasy in a social context as a means of addressing issues of gender. Because initiation is concerned primarily with gender and because definitions of gender necessarily emerge out of a social context, such a discussion cannot be limited to literary criticism. Gender and gender identification are not static concepts, but change according to social interaction. Such interaction is not a determining factor in the archetypes of myth and romance, but it is significant to the heroes of fantasy and, in particular, the development of Alexander's main character. Taran's understanding of heroism and manhood changes over the course of the series, and most of what he learns comes from his interaction with other characters. The combination of these different perspectives speaks to the multidisciplinary dimensions of my topic: the gendering of Taran's experiences and his journey to kingship.

The figure of the traditional hero emerges out of myth and archetype. In "Theory of Myth: Archetypal Criticism," Northrop Frye discusses the figure of the traditional hero in myth and folktale, positing an archetypal formula that explains the hero and his quest. He offers the dragon slayer myth as the chief archetype that informs the hero's quest, and further applies this same archetype to the heroes of romance in *The Secular Scripture: A Study of the Structure of Romance*. Lord Raglan (Fitzroy Richard Somerset), in *The Hero: A Study in Tradition, Myth, and Drama*, and the German-born psychoanalyst Otto

Rank, in *The Myth of the Birth of the Hero: A Psychological Interpretation of Mythology*, offer historical and psychoanalytic approaches to the traditional hero. However, the mythographer Joseph Campbell provides one of the most comprehensive examinations in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, in which he outlines the separation, initiation, and return as the basis for the hero's quest in myth and folktale. A survey of these works shows the traditional hero to be largely a male construct, but Margery Hourihan, in *Deconstructing the Hero: Literary Theory and Children's Literature*, challenges the primacy of the traditional, archetypal male hero, suggesting that such a hero achieves his goal through violence and aggression and perceives the world in terms of a series of interconnected dualisms that result in the subjugation of women and the environment.

Using this range of texts to establish the nature of the traditional hero enables me to discuss heroes such as Alexander's Taran by locating them in a process of initiation, which has these traditional heroes coming to kingship through unconventional means. Two methods of examining such a process are the ritual practices among so-called traditional cultures and the archetypal initiation of the traditional hero. Moreover, in an examination of the hero story from the standpoint of initiatory concerns, rites of passage demarcate the hero's development throughout the quest, and the trials by which he achieves his goal serve as markers for this development.

Rites of passage have a basis in ritual practices of initiation among many so-called traditional societies, among whom rites of initiation still exist and serve to bring the initiate over the threshold from childhood into adulthood. Brian du Toit, in *Configurations of Cultural Continuity*, discusses such rites from an anthropological standpoint. He examines rites of severance among groups living in West Africa and in South America, where boys are taken from their mothers, with the purpose of transmitting the traditions of the culture from one male generation to the next. Mircea Eliade, in *Rites and Symbols of Initiation: the Mysteries of Birth and Rebirth*, discusses similar ceremonies of severance, but his approach is from the standpoint of religious studies. Nevertheless, both critics identify rites of passage whereby initiates are taken from their mothers to enter a community of men, where they are in turn taught how to function as men within the larger society.

In *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, Campbell also comments on rites of passage among so-called traditional societies, but he places his discussion in the context of the archetypal journey of the hero from myths and folktales from around the world. Campbell puts forward what he calls the "monomyth," a three-part structure for the journey of the archetypal hero, in which he traces the separation, initiation, and return of the hero. This archetypal pattern informs the structure of Alexander's *Prydain* series: in each successive book, Taran must depart from his home, experience a series of trials in the outside world, and return at the end of the adventure. Ritual initiation figures into Taran's adventures as well, but neither pattern adequately accounts for the degree of social interaction in each of the five books, or the ways in which Taran seeks to define himself in terms of manhood and heroism. Nonetheless, they both represent valuable models for a discussion of Taran as a traditional hero of fantasy.

The emergence in the 1980s and 90s of the mythopoetic men's movement adds another form of initiation to ritualistic and archetypal patterns; it becomes one way of examining the traditional hero in a process of development specifically masculine. Robert Bly's *Iron John: A Book About Men* draws upon ritual practice, myths, and stories to illuminate the process by which boys become men, and how through this process men can become active and integrated members of the community. Bly offers initiation as a means of addressing social problems such as violence, addiction, and depression. For his part, Michael Meade, in *Men and the Water of Life: Initiation and the Tempering of Men*, comments on a series of stories intended to assist men in relating more fully to themselves and each other. *King, Warrior, Magician, Lover: Rediscovering the Archetypes of the Mature Masculine*, by Robert Moore and Douglas Gillette, examines archetypes that further illuminate men's experiences in the context of popular psychology. The mythopoetic approach identifies myths and archetypes as relevant to the lives of men; Sam Keen, in fact, brings those myths and archetypes more fully into a social arena. In *Fire in the Belly: On Being a Man*, Keen posits a process of initiation similar to Campbell's archetypal model. However, he focuses especially on social interaction as a means of explaining how manhood and men's lives are defined by the relationships between men and women. Taken together, these perspectives provide a myth-based approach to men's experiences, a model of initiation centred on men and masculinities.

The ritualistic and archetypal models serve as a counterpoint to the mythopoetic. These three models do, in fact, interrelate, but the differences emerge out of the way in which each model structures the initiation process. The ritualistic model structures initiation around severance and ritual death and rebirth; the archetypal around separation, initiation, and return; and the mythopoetic around wounding and woundedness. All three, nevertheless, contribute to a reading of Alexander's *Prydain* chronicles as a literary reworking of initiatory practice. Thus, applying these three models to Alexander's series demonstrates how the sequence moves outside the existing paradigm of the traditional hero and inscribes Taran with those qualities that emerge out of a mythopoetic approach to initiatory processes.

The mythopoetic model incorporates both the ritualistic and archetypal models, in particular the ceremony of severance that removes the initiate from the mother. Wounding, grief, and finding the father further characterize the mythopoetic model, but the end of the process for all of these models is integration and community. The mythopoetic model also has valuable applications to a fantasy series such as the *Prydain* chronicles. Taran's development over the course of the five books follows the stages in which the orphan Taran learns about heroism and how to fit within the aristocratic hierarchy of Prydain, until the need to know his parentage compels him to embark on a quest across Prydain, after which he is made a war leader in the fight against Arawn Death-Lord. What links these three models to Alexander's series is a process of initiation, and what forms an intersection between these models, approaches to the traditional hero, and the Prydain series is what Alexander calls the concern for "story."

One of the shortcomings of the mythopoetic approach to masculinity is its tendency to remove masculinity from a public arena to one that is private and mythical. Bly has taken the brunt of this criticism in his attempts to ground masculinity in a set of inherent, definable qualities which reduce men's experiences to a single process. Recent work in masculinity studies has criticized this essentialist thinking, arguing that masculinity takes a multiplicity of forms and arises out of social interaction, not biology. This focus moves the discussion of masculinity from a mythical to a social arena, where the gender order is fluid, and where masculinity is, according to Robert Connell, "simultaneously a place in gender relations, the practices through which men and women engage that place in gender, and the effects of these practices in bodily experience, personality and culture" (*Masculinities* 71).

Both Robert Connell and Michael Kimmel examine masculinity in its social context and identify a range of masculinities that take into account race, class, and sexual preference. In *The Men and the Boys*, Connell describes a social structure in which the dominant form of masculinity both subordinates and marginalizes various identifiable groups, including both men and women. He calls this dominant form "hegemonic masculinity," one that is neither the most popular nor the most appealing, but one which exercises control over women and marginalized men. In "The Social Organization of Masculinity," Connell explains that hegemonic masculinity legitimizes patriarchal domination in society and secures a claim to authority by white, heterosexual men. It is this claim to authority rather than violence that supports hegemonic masculinity, even though violence can become a means of establishing and maintaining the power of that hegemony. However, Connell also asserts that because hegemonic masculinity emerges out of the relationship between what he calls the cultural ideal and institutionalized power, it remains subject to change given the proper social conditions. In "Masculinity as Homophobia: Fear, Shame, and Silence in the Construction of Gender Identity," Kimmel adds to Connell's discussion of hegemonic masculinity, and he goes on to identify homophobia as one of the chief determinants in gender identification for men. Kimmel's *Manhood in America: a Cultural History* continues a discussion of both hegemonic masculinity and gender identification, but specifically in a context of American history and the competition that characterizes the social interaction between men. Both critics locate men and masculinities within a social context and both identify social interaction, specifically men relating to women and to other men, as the means of defining masculinity.

Connell and Kimmel have criticized the mythopoetic movement for removing the discussion of masculinity from a social arena and reducing it to a single form. Nevertheless, Connell does acknowledge the contribution of the mythopoetic men's movement to masculinity studies insofar as it provided a means of beginning a discussion about the emotional lives of men in the 1970s and 80s. In *The Men and the Boys*, he identifies the nature of this contribution as:

> the importance of men's emotional lives - which strikes many … as a revelation, precisely because conventional middle-class western masculinity tends to suppress emotion and deny vulnerability. To emphasize that men do have emotional troubles, that masculine stereotypes can be damaging, that men suffer from isolation, and that men too can hold hands and cry - this is not a bad thing. Writers like Keen, especially, have eloquent things to say about the distortions of men's emotional lives, and how they are connected with violence, alienation, and environmental destruction. (5)

What masculinity studies critics have in common is the recognition that at some point men need to operate within a community of both men and women, regardless of social, economic, or ethnic background. This is a crucial point because only as men relate to both men and women can social change occur. Such a range in masculinity studies further allows for a way to read stories of the traditional hero in a new way, in particular those mid-twentieth-century writers of fantasy who employ this heroic paradigm. Moreover, yoking the ritualistic, archetypal, and mythopoetic models of initiation with more recent work on hegemonic masculinity provides an adequate understanding of Taran as a contemporary, non-traditional hero.

Taran's position as a non-traditional hero is most informed by his response to and subversion of Prydain's aristocratic hegemony. This form of masculine hegemony reveals Alexander's series in a new light, identifying the centre of power in Prydain as specifically male and one which maintains its position through violence and competition. The Sons of Don is the aristocratic class that forms the core of this hegemony, while the petty kings and chieftains of Prydain represent those who are complicit. The women, farmers, and peasants of Prydain are subordinate to the hegemony, while characters of questionable status such as the orphan Taran and the animal-like Gurgi are marginalized. The only group outside this power structure is the people of the Free Commots, a region populated by independent artisans that represent a democratic ideal within Prydain. As Taran moves through each stage, he must come to terms with hegemonic masculinity in its aristocratic form. Because high fantasy from the mid-twentieth century follows a largely British model, Alexander, Tolkien, and Le Guin present a social structure that is aristocratic in form and based on class. Even with Americans such as Alexander and Le

Guin, power often rests with an identifiable group that relies on force to maintain its position within the social hierarchy. Aristocratic hegemony is always at risk from the forces, evil or otherwise, that would seek to challenge it; the violence that often characterizes fantasy as a genre therefore becomes the chief means of supporting that hegemony. The traditional hero often resides outside this centre of power, but his quest usually brings him to a place where he can assume hegemonic control. In this way the aristocratic hegemony is subject to change, but only in terms of who asserts that control. Thus, the traditional hero is more likely to assume the authority of the existing power structure and its supporting violence than to dismantle it altogether.

Why, then, are forms of initiation and masculinity studies significant in a discussion of Taran as a non-traditional hero in a fantasy landscape? The critics who speak to Alexander's *Prydain* chronicles discuss a range of issues with respect to Taran and his development; none, however, examines the series itself as a process of initiation, and none addresses those issues particular to masculinity studies. Of those critics who examine Taran's development as a hero, Lois Kuznets explains that development in terms of the myth of Arthur. In "'High Fantasy' in America: A Study of Lloyd Alexander, Ursula Le Guin, and Susan Cooper," she identifies what she calls the Arthurian development novel, and how characters such as Taran, Arren from Le Guin's *The Farthest Shore*, and Bran from Susan Cooper's *The Dark is Rising* series all follow the kind of development that emerges out of the myth of Arthur. Jill May, in *Lloyd Alexander*, and Ravenna Helson, in "Fantasy and Self-Discovery," offer comments on Taran as a hero of fantasy, but neither examines in depth the forward movement of the series in relation to Taran's initiation into kingship. Elizabeth Lane comes closest to identifying the initiatory nature of the chronicles in "Lloyd Alexander's Chronicles of Prydain & the Welsh Tradition," where she compares the *Prydain* series to the four books of the Mabinogi, the first four tales in *The Mabinogion*. Translated from the Welsh, *mabinogi* signifies "boy deeds," which is the nearest assertion of the preparatory nature of the five books among Alexander's critics.

Jon Stott, in "Alexander's Chronicles of Prydain: The Nature of Beginnings," and Norma Bagnall, in "An American Hero in Welsh Fantasy: *The Mabinogion*, Alan Garner and Lloyd Alexander," are significant in that each addresses, to some degree, the

American nature of Alexander's fantasy. Stott refers to Taran as a democratic hero, while Bagnall explains how the series turns into an American-style fantasy following the third book in the series. Both identify Taran's orphan status and his self-reliance as qualities particular to a democratic or American hero, and both work to bring the discussion of Taran's heroism to a point that lies outside that of the traditional hero, but neither takes into account the social interaction and competition that define Taran's sense of that which makes a man and a hero.

My purpose is to discuss Alexander's series as a literary model of initiation informed by three interrelated models: the ritualistic, archetypal, and mythopoetic. Each model is further informed by the competition and social interaction that, according to Connell and Kimmel, define masculinities. I will begin my study of Taran and his development over the course of the *Prydain* series with a critical review of Lloyd Alexander, his major works over fifty years of writing, and the critical response to Taran and the *Prydain* series. Next, I will propose a methodology for a discussion of the series, including the ritualistic, archetypal, and mythopoetic approaches to initiation, and how those approaches interact with more recent work in masculinity studies. Each of the five succeeding chapters discusses the chronicles in turn. Taran separates from home and community and meets the mentors who will bring him forward to the end of the first stage of his initiation. The second stage - the road of trials - incorporates the next three chapters. Taran's entrance into the world of men and warriors introduces him to Prydain's aristocratic hegemony. The encounter with the feminine locates him as a desiring subject and forces him to an encounter with women in a social and archetypal context. The meeting with the father brings Taran to a confrontation with the wound particular to the ritualistic and mythopoetic models, highlights the American nature of Taran's development, and concludes the second stage of his initiation. His ascension to kingship marks his assumption of leadership in Prydain and brings him to the end of his initiation and the marriage to the princess.

The ritualistic, archetypal, and mythopoetic models of initiation and more recent work in masculinity studies show Taran of Alexander's *Prydain* series as a new kind of hero. Each book brings him one step further in his initiation: he separates from home and community, enters the world of men, encounters the feminine and the erotic, discovers the wound and confronts the father, and finally assumes a position from which he can challenge the aristocratic hegemony of Prydain. Taran's ascension to kingship is neither marked by the dominance and control of the hegemony, nor does it reflect the violence and aggression of the traditional hero story. Taran becomes high king of Prydain by his initiation into grief and woundedness, and he discovers the meaning of manhood through social interaction and a concern for Prydain and its people. Taran emerges as a subversive force in a traditional form, re-writing the traditional hero story in such a way as to begin his reign with a concern for social interaction, community, and the environment.

Chapter 1

Lloyd Alexander: A Literary and Critical Review

Lloyd Alexander is known for his *Prydain* chronicles, a five-part series that uses an ancient Welsh landscape as the background to the coming of age of its main character. In more than thirty years of writing, Alexander has received critical acclaim for his novels and picture books, but the *Prydain* series stands apart as compellingly concerned with the masculine characteristics of Taran, the focalizing character for each of the books. The *Prydain* chronicles, published in the 1960s, represent only part of Alexander's body of work; nonetheless, these books remain central to his career and embody his interest in masculinity and gender relations.

The critical response to Alexander recognizes the central place of the *Prydain* books in his corpus, as well as his place in relation to other writers of fantasy from the same period; however, the response does not address the focus of the series on masculinity. The critical response is fourfold: locating Alexander in relation to other writers of fantasy such as J. R. R. Tolkien, Ursula K. Le Guin, and Susan Cooper; explaining Alexander's use of Welsh sources as the basis for the characters and landscape of Prydain; identifying those aspects of the series that are strikingly American; and explaining the development of Taran in terms of the myth of Arthur. These readings offer a means of addressing the series in terms of broad issues related to fantasy as a genre and the examination of Taran as an American hero, but they do not address the cumulative effect of the five books, or what the series has to say about the masculine development of its main character. In his "preface" to each of the books, Alexander contends that any of the *Prydain* books can be read independently of the rest, a claim which speaks more to the marketability of the individual texts than to their place in the series. I argue that each of the books forms a part of a larger cohesive structure that demands consideration to appreciate the value of the series. More than its place in the development of children's fantasy, more than its use of Welsh sources, and more than its value as an American fantasy, the series represents a literary model of initiation for its central character. Over the course of the series, Taran develops from Pig-Keeper to high king and from boy into man. By virtue of its structure, the series becomes a vehicle for the enactment of a specifically masculine form of initiation and offers a mythic, Americanized rendering of the movement from the immaturity of boyhood to the maturity of manhood.

To establish the context for my claims, I want to begin by locating Alexander in relation to the development of children's fantasy after World War II, and tracing his development as a writer of fantasy by examining the critical response to Alexander and his canon. What I propose is that three interrelated initiatory models–the ritualistic, the archetypal, and the mythopoetic–inform the specifically masculine nature of Taran's development and that they demonstrate how the series moves beyond the bounds of fantasy to incorporate issues relevant to men and masculinity. The ritualistic approach grounds the initiatory nature of the series in the context of ritual practices among so-called traditional cultures, and Joseph Campbell's *The Hero with A Thousand Faces* represents the archetypal basis for Alexander's use of the genre, while Bly's *Iron John: A Book about Men* and Michael Meade's *Men and the Water of Life: Initiation and the Tempering of Men* move Alexander's work into the arena of the masculine. By further considering these approaches in the context of gender construction and social relations in such essays as Connell's "The Social Organization of Masculinity" and Kimmel's "Masculinity as Homophobia: Fear, Shame, and Silence in the Construction of Gender Identity," we can read the *Prydain* series as an exploration of both masculinity and the interplay between genders. In this way, the development of Taran over the five books foregrounds the construction of gender through a definable initiatory process within the traditions of heroic fantasy.

i. Heroic Fantasy and the Secondary World

The presence of non-rational phenomena is the general consensus on what constitutes fantasy literature, and critics as different in their approaches as Lin Carter in *Imaginary Worlds; the Art of Fantasy*, Ann Swinfen in *In Defence of Fantasy: A Study of the Genre in English and American Literature Since 1945*, and Rosemary Jackson in *Fantasy, The Literature of Subversion* agree that the non-rational is the defining feature of the genre. The *Prydain* series meets this criterion, but, as a way of further classifying the series, it is useful to consider the definitions of fantasy offered by Marshall Tymn, Kenneth Zahorski, and Robert Boyer. In their study of fantasy from the early to mid-twentieth century, *Fantasy Literature: A Core Collection and Reference Guide,* the three critics begin by describing literary fantasy as a way to define a variety of texts, from dream-visions and weird tales to lost race adventures and science fiction. They define the *Prydain* series as high or heroic fantasy, a category that specifically refers to texts that make use of a secondary world in which magic operates as a part of the natural order: "The worlds of high fantasy are secondary worlds, such as the Forest Sauvage, Middle-earth, or Prydain, and they manifest a consistent order explainable in terms of the supernatural (i.e., deities) or in terms of the less definable (but still recognizable) magical powers of faerie (e.g., wizards and enchantresses)" (Tymn 6). They explain that high fantasy is further characterized by its ancient setting and heroic nature, and that the elevated, often archaic language sets this sub-genre apart from science fiction and science fantasy or the purely supernatural. In such fantasy, the secondary world is self-contained, while sometimes forming a parallel to a land or country outside itself. Tolkien's Middle-earth, for example, is Norse and Anglo-Saxon in flavour, while Prydain is Welsh, but neither represents anything more than an imaginary world unto itself. Moreover, because high fantasy is similar in structure to myths and folktales, texts within this category often use the pattern of the quest, magic, and the slaying of a monster that brings them more into line with the form of romance than with other sub-genres of fantasy literature.

A benchmark for a discussion of high or heroic fantasy of the mid-twentieth century is J. R. R. Tolkien's "On Faerie Stories," and it forms the basis for Boyer and Zahorski's definition of the genre. Within the secondary world, whether it is Tolkien's Middle-earth, Le Guin's Earthsea, Lewis' Narnia, or Alexander's Prydain, inner consistency is paramount to the belief in such a world. Such consistency is crucial to what Tolkien calls "secondary belief" or the belief in a secondary world:

> The story maker, as subcreator, makes a secondary world, which the listener can enter...Inside what he relates is true. It accords with the laws of that world; you, therefore, believe it while you are, as it were, inside. The moment disbelief arises, the spell is broken. The magic, or rather art, has failed. You are then out in the primary world again, looking at the little abortive secondary world from outside. ("Faerie" 48)

Secondary belief results from what Tolkien identifies as the sub-creative process, the act of creating a secondary world, which in turn must be upheld by the natural laws that govern it. For Tolkien, secondary belief implies adopting a belief in a different world for as long as that world engages the audience's attention.

Secondary world fantasies are those contained within an imaginary world, incorporating magic and magical creatures, but still recognizable in their use of realistic detail. Such fantasies also contain archetypal or mythic structures, which further help to inform character and setting. Alexander is one of the fantasists from this period whose works fit within Tolkien's definition. Prydain, if loosely based on the landscape of ancient Wales, remains a secondary world, borrowing heavily from Welsh sources but remaining as much a self-contained secondary world as Tolkien's Middle-earth or Le Guin's Earthsea. What helps to set Alexander's series apart is the individual experience of its main character. Taran's development from boy to man is based on his experience of separation, of grief, and on his interactions with other men, both those who oppose him and those who function as mentor or father figures.

ii. The Nature of Fantasy: Prydain as a Secondary World

The *Prydain* chronicles represent one of Alexander's chief contributions to the genre, and they are the only books that fit within the genre of high or heroic fantasy. His comments on fantasy further help to fix his *Prydain* books in relation to the tradition of high fantasy and align him with such writers as Tolkien and Le Guin. In his "foreword" to Tymn, Zahorski, and Boyer's *Fantasy Literature: A Core Collection and Reference Guide*, Alexander discusses the nature of fantasy as a natural human expression as "necessary to life as breathing ...a form that deliberately, exuberantly, seems to turn from the real world to one of its own creation" (Tymn vii). What Alexander has in common with other writers of children's fantasy from this period is an understanding of what Tolkien calls the sub-creative act and the conviction that secondary world fantasies, like folktales, become a symbolic and often stylized representation of the primary world.

In his "foreword," Alexander discusses fantasy in terms of human processes, and identifies the means by which the human psyche is able to use the genre to address issues of identity at an unconscious or archetypal level:

> Great fantasy has the direct impact of a dream and the strength of a metaphor. Dreaming, indeed, is to consciousness what metaphor is to language. And what metaphor is to language, fantasy is to literature. By no means would I dispute the "therapeutic" value of fairy tales and myth-based fantasy for the young: in defusing anxieties and resolving emotional conflicts, as Bruno Bettelheim analyzes them in *The Uses of Enchantment*. Even if this were its only function, it would still be a vital one. But, while adults may overcome infantile conflicts, they acquire others no less acute; and, no less than children do we need ways that help us make sense of our inner and outer worlds. Fantasy operates on adults with the same strength as on the young. An adult may respond to fantasy on one level, a child on another. But respond they do. Magic does not discriminate according to age, sex, or ethnic origin. However, as in all true magic, fantasy declines to reveal its ultimate secret. We may only guess. We recognize its power to refresh, to give new perspectives, to fill us, in Tolkien's words, with 'awe and wonder'; and certainly to delight and entertain us is itself no mean feat. Effortlessly, it engages the deepest and most abstract questions of theology, cosmology, metaphysics. Or, for the sheer joy of it, plays like a juggler with ideas, relationships, and possibilities. It can, with equal ease, evoke ancient archetypes and resonances of the Jungian collective unconscious; and simultaneously reflect the most immediate contemporary problems. Its meanings can be both clear and elusive; suggestive yet never fully grasped. We read fantasy any way that pleases us at a given moment: as mythologists, historians, theologians, psychoanalysts, or social critics. (ix-x)

Such comments define Alexander's approach to fantasy in terms of archetypes and Jungian psychology, while in a general way his "Preface" positions the genre in relation to a living, breathing readership, in whom fantasy generates a primal response because of its connection to psychological processes and ethical systems.

Alexander's comments in "The Grammar of Story" further reflect those basic rules that govern fantasy and the creation of a secondary world. This essay, published as part of a collection in honour of Zena Sutherland, uses grammar as a metaphor to explain the nature of what Alexander calls "story." At the outset, Alexander states that story, or more generally creation, is a non-rational process, which must adhere to a specific set of natural laws:

> Creation, in its early stages and, to one degree or another, during all others, is a non-rational process. Non-rational, however, is not irrational. After the first creative spark, the logic of imagination should be as rigorous as Euclid's. Storytellers have the privilege of inventing their own logic. They depart from it at their peril. What helps to make the logic of story logical is preparation. Within the frame of their story, playing by their own rules, storytellers can cause almost anything to happen by preparing for it in advance, by laying the groundwork for future actions. (9-10)

Alexander's comments are not specific to fantasy, but, as in his "Preface" to *Fantasy Literature*, he returns to the basic story structures as a way of explaining the nature of the creative act, as well as the human, emotional response to structured story.

In his "Preface" and his essay on the grammar of story, Alexander draws on Tolkien's ideas about the non-rational nature of faerie stories, as well as the need for inner consistency within a secondary world, using Tolkien's comment about the consolation offered by faerie stories to explain the creative act. Thus, it is story that becomes the organizing principle which seeks to order the human psyche and frame the paradoxical nature of inevitability and free choice into something understandable:

> Story, perhaps, reconciles us and helps us to accept this terrifying contradiction – to live with it and still keep our sanity. Perhaps this accounts for the sense of satisfaction, I would even say "consolation," we feel when a story has ended rightly: not a question of happy or unhappy ending, but the rightness of it. (11)

As a way of explaining this human response to story, Alexander refers to Campbell's monomyth and the quest of the archetypal hero as a recognizable pattern. He suggests that stories occur within what Eliade calls "primordial time," which further fixes him within an archetypal approach to literature. Nonetheless, as Alexander suggests, folktales, fantasy as well as much of realistic fiction, are founded on the structures of myth, without necessarily being mythic in origin.

With such an archetypal foundation to his writing, I find it useful to incorporate this approach into a discussion of Alexander's work, especially the *Prydain* texts, a sub-genre of high fantasy. Nevertheless, and in spite of his assertions, Alexander relies less on these archetypal structures than do other writers of fantasy from the same period. The *Prydain* books are driven by social interaction, and Taran's single-minded need to understand manhood is what shifts the focus of the books toward the construction of gender and what constitutes the masculine.

iii. Alexander and Publishing

Alexander's contribution to the genre of fantasy in the mid-twentieth century is indisputable, but his *Prydain* books form only a part of his writing for children and young adults, which includes semi-autobiographical and historical novels, as well as fantasies that do not rely on the landscape of Prydain. His entire work can be separated into different phases, distinguished by clusters of individual texts.

The early work, following years of rejected manuscripts, consisted largely of autobiographical, semi-autobiographical, and historical fiction. Alexander also translated a number of manuscripts from French, mostly as a means of sustaining a growing household. The next phase of his work is the *Prydain* series itself, along with a collection of related stories published several years after the last book in the series appeared in 1968. After completing the *Prydain* series, Alexander continued to write fantasy, but of a different sort, moving more and more toward period-specific novels, and publishing a number of picture books over the course of three decades. In spite of the direction Alexander's writing would eventually take, moving away from the heroic mode to a generalized style of fantasy and period-specific books, the *Prydain* series remains central to his career and represents his interest in masculinity issues.

Alexander's first four books are autobiographical and do not come within a scent of anything fantastic. *And Let the Credit Go*, published in 1955, after the rejection of three manuscripts, is based on Alexander's first job out of high school as a bank messenger. In the next several years, he published two books of historical fiction, *Border Hawk: August Bondi* and *Flagship Hope: Aaron Lopez*, for the Jewish Historical Society, as well as three others – *My Five Tigers, Janine is French,* and *My Love Affair with Music* – each more autobiographical than the last. In this early period, he also translated several works from French, including Sartre's *Nausea* and *The Wall*, as well as a collection of poetry by Eluard in 1951, none of which unduly influenced Alexander's career. Nonetheless, by the time he began the *Prydain* chronicles in the 1960s, he was already established as a writer of historical and autobiographical fiction.

Alexander made his first attempt at fantasy with *Time Cat* in 1963. This book is a hybrid of fantasy and history, in which Jason, the protagonist, is taken by his cat, Gareth, to various historical times, from ancient Egypt to the colonies of New England; the book falls between the first and second phases of Alexander's career. In *Lloyd Alexander, Evangeline Walton Ensley, Kenneth Morris: A Primary and Secondary Bibliography,* Kenneth Zahorski and Robert Boyer explain that it was Alexander's research into the time of the Welsh druids that led him to *The Mabinogion* and the stories of ancient Wales. The *Prydain* chronicles emerged out of his fascination with *The Mabinogion*, as well as his time spent training in Wales during World War II, and it is hardly a coincidence that the series focuses on the experiences of an adolescent on the cusp of adulthood, the subject of Alexander's first book, following his early attempts to write about Boston's upper-class society.

The five books in the *Prydain* series, not including the collection of stories that followed *The High King*, form a dividing line between Alexander's early and later writing. These books focus on the coming of age of Taran, orphan and Assistant Pig-Keeper to Hen Wen, the oracular pig. Each of the books begins on the little farm of Caer Dallben and moves out into the world, with each successive adventure being placed a year or so apart, save for the final book that follows immediately upon the fourth. Zahorski and Boyer are generous in their praise of the *Prydain* books, identifying the central place the chronicles occupy in the corpus of Alexander's work:

> While the Chronicles of *Prydain* might not be the "World's Greatest Novel" that Alexander once dreamt of writing, they are unquestionably outstanding works of literary fantasy and are likely to remain the central work of Alexander's career. (14)

While the chronicles occupy such a place in Alexander's career, the books are more than notable works of literary fantasy. Taran is not simply an archetype: each book is another preparatory stage toward kingship, but Taran learns about the limitations and possibilities of manhood by taking responsibility and leading his companions on their various quests. As an orphan, Taran must construct himself as he goes, learning and modelling his own behaviour after other men, until he can assume the kingship at the end of the series. It is with the *Prydain* books that we begin to see Alexander's interest in masculinity and gender relations.

Following the publication of *The High King* came *The Foundling and Other Tales*, a collection of short tales meant to add further background to the chronicles. This collection represents specific background to the *Prydain* books in that the *Foundling* tales provide the answers to questions arising throughout the series, such as how Dallben came by his power, how Coll saved Hen Wen from Annuvin, the history of the black sword, and how Arawn stole the secrets of the craftsmen and farmers of Prydain. Both "The Foundling" and "The Truthful Harp" were published as picture books, and all of the tales follow a straightforward structure, a further tribute to Alexander's keen interest in story and the folktale.

In the decade following the chronicles, Alexander published fantasy and picture books. *The Marvelous Misadventures of Sebastian* appeared in 1970, and as Boyer and Zahorski point out, this is another novel about the coming of age of a young man, Sebastian, the fourth violin in the king's orchestra. *The Marvelous Misadventures of Sebastian* is set in a landscape recalling 16th-century England and is fantastic mostly in terms of the improbable nature of Sebastian's adventures. Alexander moves back into fantasy proper with *The Cat Who Wished to be a Man* in 1971 and *The Wizard in the Tree* in 1975. Boyer and Zahorski suggest that these books represent a trend toward later settings, from the Medieval to the Renaissance, and a move from the comic with *The Cat Who Wished to be a Man* to the serious in *The Wizard in the Tree*. Both books are fantasy, with a strong element of magic, but they are not high fantasy in the heroic sense, as is the *Prydain* series. Alexander finishes the decade with *The Town Cats and Other Tales* in 1977, stories about talking cats, and *The First Two Lives of Lukas-Kasha* in 1979, a book with an Eastern setting and an *Arabian Nights* tales flavour that anticipates his later fantasies.

The second of Alexander's major series is the *Westmark* books, published in the early 1980s and including *Westmark, The Kestrel,* and *The Beggar Queen*. There are significant parallels between the *Prydain* chronicles and the *Westmark* books, especially in terms of character. The series is set in a Renaissance landscape, centred in the kingdom of Westmark and focusing on the political turmoil caused by evil counsellor Cabbarus, who eventually usurps the crown of Westmark. Specific characters in the *Westmark* books parallel those in the *Prydain* series: Theo and Taran, Mickle and Eilonwy, and, to a lesser degree, Florian and Gwydion. The major difference between the two series is that the *Prydain* chronicles are high fantasy proper, with a Medieval landscape abounding with wizards, witches, kings, and princesses, while the *Westmark* books are void of magic, with Theo and his democrat companions fighting for a republic. Like Taran, Theo interacts with other men, but the series is less focused on what constitutes manhood than it is on the moral dilemma of its main character.

Another series that stands apart from Alexander's books of fantasy and that recalls his early efforts to write about Boston society is the *Vesper Holly* books, five in total, which focus on the intelligent and irrepressible Vesper Holly. The *Illyrian Adventure, The El Dorado Adventure, The Drackenberg Adventure, The Jedera Adventure,* and *The Philadelphia Adventure* all fall into the H. Rider Haggard tradition of the romantic adventurer. Each of Vesper's schemes begins with her nosing through her deceased father's archaeological notebooks that eventually lead her into mystery and danger. These books are written as first-person narratives, told from the point of view of Brinny, Vesper's bumbling, if well-meaning guardian. As a focalizing character, Brinny is two dimensional, but this flatness of character is less significant in light of Vesper herself, as his chief function is to play a stodgy Dr. Watson to Vesper's sassy Sherlock Holmes.

Two more recent texts that look back to Alexander's earlier works are *The Iron Ring,* published in 1990, and *The Arkadians,* first appearing in 1995. Alexander returns to the *Arabian Nights* flavour of *Lukas-Kasha* in *The Iron Ring,* a story set in ancient India, in which a young king is tricked into relinquishing his kingdom and his freedom in a dice game with a mysterious sorcerer. Tamar wakes to discover an iron ring on his finger, and he embarks on an arduous quest to find the sorcerer and regain his freedom. The Eastern flavour of enchantment of this book suggests Alexander's interest in *The Arabian Nights*, and Tamar's lessons in honour and what it means to be a warrior look back to Taran and the *Prydain* chronicles.

Alexander's interest in myth and story comes to a head in *The Arkadians*, an adventure set in a land reminiscent of ancient Greece. The book uses Greek myth in the same way that the Prydain books uses the stories from *The Mabinogion.* Alexander is nothing if not consistent. Aspects of *The Arkadians* recall both the *Westmark* series and the *Prydain* books, and the character group in *The Arkadians* has a similar consistency to these earlier series. The hero of *The Arkadians* is Lucian, a bean counter living in the same city as the king of Arkadia. When Lucian unwittingly tells one of the king's evil soothsayers about inconsistencies in the king's accounts, he realizes that his skill as a counter has put him in danger. As he leaves the palace, Lucian meets a talking donkey named Fronto--in fact a poet under an enchantment--and the two flee the city in fear for their lives. A love interest develops between Lucian and Joy of the Dance, a young wise woman Lucian and Fronto meet on their travels, and they gather more companions as they try to find a way to break the spell over Fronto. The love interest between Lucian and Joy of the Dance and Lucian's search for his place in the world are echoes of the *Prydain* books and the *Westmark* series. What becomes important in this book, as well as in Alexander's earlier series, is the social interaction between the characters and the tension between the main male and female characters as they move forward on their quest. Nonetheless, what sets this book apart is the presence and use of story throughout Lucian's adventures. Fronto is a poet, always commenting on the nature of story, and each of the various characters Lucian meets tells his or her own stories. Alexander draws on Greek myth for many of the adventures, including the story of the Minotaur and the voyages of Odysseus, but after the adventures are over, Lucian begins to think of putting them into a form that can be told as stories, going so far as to take the adventure of the besieged city and a wooden horse and turning it into a great story of love and honour. Like Lukas-Kasha, Lucian becomes a storyteller by the end of *The Arkadians,* effectively forefronting the power of story as the driving force of the narrative and reinforcing its importance in Alexander's corpus.

What is clear from examining Alexander's work is his interest in both story and fantasy as a genre. He makes consistent use of both in his writing. What is also clear is that the interplay between characters is foundational to most of his books. Whether it is Taran seeking to discover his parentage, Theo working to establish a republic, or Lucian trying to discover a cure for Fronto's transformation, the narrative is carried forward by the interactions among a group of companions. These various characters sometimes seem homogeneous, but they always achieve their ends by means of a cooperative effort. Such an effort is especially true for the *Prydain* books: Taran is never without a companion. His desperate need to prove himself a man and his eventual need to discover his parentage all occur within the company of others; and what he discovers about being a man by the end of the series has as much to do with the Princess Eilonwy and the other companions as it does with his own efforts. The *Prydain* chronicles, in spite of being Alexander's first major series, are his most thorough exploration of gender relations.

iv. Critical responses to the *Prydain* Series

In his "Preface" to *Fantasy Literature* and "The Grammar of Story," Alexander outlines his views on both fantasy as a genre and the nature of story, but his comments are in no way exclusive to fantasy. If anything, they show the range of Alexander's interests. The critical response to Alexander, however, sees him as primarily a fantasist and considers the *Prydain* books his chief contribution to the field. This response is easily grouped according to four approaches: those who examine Alexander in relation to his place within the tradition of secondary world fantasy, those who discuss him in relation to his Welsh sources, those who identify him as an American fantasist, and those who place him in the context of the myth of Arthur.

The first group includes Ravenna Helson, Jill May, and Diana Waggoner, all of whom offer comments on Alexander's contribution to the genre of fantasy. Helson, in "Fantasy and Self Discovery," examines a number of fantasists in archetypal terms. She groups Alexander with Tolkien, Lewis, and Garner in what she calls "patriarchal," or heroic, fantasy. She sees the development of the ego in terms of the hero's quest, emphasizing "aggression, achievement, and order" as well as "humility and a sense of wonder and awe" (Helson 125) as the defining characteristic of this form. She further identifies the quest as the form best suited to heroic fantasy. She draws a parallel between the development of the masculine psyche and the heroic quest, with its accompanying elements such as various helper figures, the marriage to the princess, and the restoration of the kingdom with the death of the monster:

> The ego, we infer, aspires in this case to be independent and the dominant influence in the personality. It regards itself as different from and superior to the instinctive or passive. This attitude seems to constellate "enemies" in the unconscious, and thus is generated the battle between good and evil which is a characteristic feature of these books. (15)

Helson does not discuss the details of Alexander's books, and neither does she explain how Alexander's chronicles produce a sense of "awe and wonder," but her reading of patriarchal fantasy offers a connection between a Jungian and an archetypal examination of such works.

Jill May provides the most direct comments on Alexander's work as a whole, offering close readings of each of the five chronicles and suggesting that, as juvenile fantasy, the series is more contemporary and consequently less mythic. With respect to *The Book of Three,* May suggests that the focus on the adolescent hero brings Taran much closer to Alexander's "youthful" audience:

> [Taran] must learn to think less about himself and less about his destiny, and more about the welfare of others. He must change his egocentric goals for ones that give consideration to the needs of others. He must learn that sometimes the hero must let others win the hero's praise in order for the right cause to prevail. *The Book of Three* concerns Taran's need to become a hero, to discover who he is, and to return home content with himself. (27-28)

May suggests that Alexander's shift away from the mythic and his use of a watered-down variation of the hero's quest according to Joseph Campbell enable him to offer what she calls moral lessons in honour, loyalty, and self-sacrifice, qualities which make the book instructive without necessarily making it a better fantasy.

Alexander's tendency to offer such moral lessons is, in part, the basis of Diana Waggoner's criticism of the *Prydain* books, the only critic to find fault with the series. She suggests that Alexander's world lacks the depth that other fantasists such as Tolkien achieve with their secondary worlds, and that Alexander attempts to substitute the "moral seriousness of fable for the mythic seriousness of epic" (Waggoner 968). This excessive emphasis on moral lessons and relentless focus on the theme of maturation are

Waggoner's chief criticisms of the series. Nonetheless, she acknowledges that Alexander is skilled in the presentation of such morals in his shorter tales:

> Alexander's real genius is not for the epic fantasy form in which he made his first great success, but for the didactic fable, the moral lesson wrapped up in amusing tale. His didacticism is consistent throughout his work and reflects his genuine moral seriousness, relieved by a facetious humour and a narrative skill that he has greatly polished since he began writing fantasy in the early 1960s. (967)

Waggoner's comments refer to stories such as "The Truthful Harp" or "Coll and his White Pig," two stories from *The Foundling and Other Stories* that demonstrate Alexander's interest in the folktale as a vehicle for his moral seriousness.

Alexander's didacticism is less significant than his use of Welsh sources as the mainstay of his secondary world and as to whether or not he retells or integrates material from the tales of *The Mabinogion.* This loose collection of Welsh legends, first translated and edited by Lady Charlotte Guest in 1849, is the source of many of Alexander's names and place-names. Both Richard West and Elizabeth Lane address the nature of Alexander's borrowings from the Welsh, as well as the degree to which this material influences his secondary world.

In "The Tolkinians: Some Introductory Reflections on Alan Garner, Carol Kendall, and Lloyd Alexander," West explains how the three authors reflect the nature of Tolkien's fantasies, not by imitating his manner, style, or themes, but by virtue of inspiration: "All I mean to imply by the term [the Tolkinians] is that they are fantasists. No doubt their own predilection led them to the genre without the need of influence by a particular author, whose work might not be the same but for the literary example of J. R. R. Tolkien" (5). West is quick to point out that these three authors made use of *The Mabinogion* as their chief source for developing their respective worlds, unlike Tolkien who relied on Anglo-Saxon material for his creation of Middle-earth; but it is this construction of a cosmology where West finds a connection between Tolkien and Alexander, in spite of the difference in their source materials.

Given Alexander's use of *The Mabinogion,* the question remains as to whether or not he is borrowing from the Welsh or retelling the original Welsh legends. Elizabeth Lane suggests that he is doing neither. The *Prydain* books, according to her, are re-workings of the ancient legends only insofar as they represent the boy-deeds of Taran. "Mabinogi" roughly translates from the Welsh as "boy deeds." Hence, the four branches of the Mabinogi – "Pwyll Lord of Dyved," "Branwen Daughter of Llyr," "Manawydan Son of Llyr," and "Math Son of Mathonwy"– represent only part of Charlotte Guest's collection of Welsh legends, which she refers to collectively as *The Mabinogion*. Jeffrey Gantz, in the introduction to his 1976 translation of *The Mabinogion*, explains that the four branches are only loosely connected to one another and that any resemblance to a coherent body of legends was lost as the tales were passed on from one redactor to another; therefore, attempting to identify a single character as the subject of the four branches is next to impossible. But with respect to the *Prydain* chronicles, Lane suggests that Alexander creates a Mabinogi for Taran by tracing his development from Pig-Keeper to high king.

Lane, like West, acknowledges Alexander's debt to Tolkien for his cosmology, but suggests that it is necessary to look beyond Alexander's mythological universe to discover the appeal of the five books. She identifies some of the analogies to Charlotte Guest's notes as Hen Wen's flight across Wales, Math as the high king, and Gwydion as a powerful enchanter. The legend of the sword Dyrnwyn, which Charlotte Guest identifies as one of the "thirteen precious things" in Wales, is a further example of how Alexander uses details from his source to develop the plot of his series. Although Jill May makes a thematic connection between Eilonwy, the princess of the series, and Branwen in "Branwen Daughter of Llyr," Lane states that Eilonwy has no direct counterparts in the Welsh, while she suggests that a character such as Ellidyr finds a counterpart in Evnissyen of the same tale, and that the cauldron in the second of the chronicles is connected to the cauldron of Bran. Interestingly, *Taran Wanderer* is the one book most removed from the Welsh sources, while she suggests that *The High King* is a revision of the tale of Pryderi from the four branches. Alexander is using material from *The Mabinogion*, but he is less rewriting than creating something new:

> Probably two thirds of Alexander's borrowings are from Lady Guest's notes. The material of which the Prydain cycle is built is thus peripheral to the main body of *The Mabinogion*. ... Alexander has, rather, put the lesser-known elements in a framework wherein they are not peripheral. (Lane 28)

Welsh sources aside, Taran, as a hero, is an anomaly among his British counterparts; he is an American, or democratic hero, an assertion upheld by the third group of Alexander's critics. Jon Stott and Norma Bagnall focus on Taran's Americanness as a way of understanding the series as distinct from other fantasies of the period. In "The Nature of Beginnings," Stott agrees with Jill May to the extent that Taran's heroism is centred on morality and values, particularly American values, while Taran himself is a character with whom his audience can identify:

> One might say that Taran is the democratic version of Joseph Campbell's *The Hero with a Thousand Faces.* An orphan looking for his father, he is really in search of his own identity and social role. A low mimetic, democratic hero, Taran is thus very similar to the intended readers of the Prydain series, young adolescents struggling to define themselves. (68)

Taran has the orphan status of the hero of myth and folktale, but he never proves to be nobly born, as is his hope from the beginning of the series. Stott points out how Taran must learn the virtues of self-sacrifice and patience, wherein actions such as relinquishing the brooch of Adaon in the second book reflect his growing maturity and self-worth. But the development of self-worth is not exactly a key ingredient in the development of the hero, and it is here that Alexander is adapting the figure of the hero as a way of becoming closer to his child-audience.

Stott goes on to explain that the point of sympathetic contact for Alexander's audience is, of course, Taran himself, and each book's fast-paced, action-packed narrative helps to trace Taran's development for younger readers, "not yet ready for extended passages of character revelation or analysis" (Stott 69). The circular structure of each of the five chronicles, according to Stott, provides a means of measuring Taran's development, until he stands once again in front of the cottage at Caer Dallben as the High King of Prydain. Symbolic landscapes throughout the series reinforce the fact that the chronicles follow the mode of romance, in which good and evil dwelling places such as Caer Dallben and Caer Dathyl are set against Spiral Castle and the Castle of Llyr. Caer Dallben is the only one of these four places that survives by the end of the series. Caer Dathyl is destroyed by the cauldron-born, while Spiral Castle and the Castle of Llyr, not to mention Annuvin itself, collapse upon themselves, "not so much because they have been defeated by the forces of goodness, but because evil itself is basically self-destructive" (Stott 70). By the end of the series, Taran literally finds himself at his own front door. According to Stott, this spiralling pattern of departure and return reinforces Taran's development for young readers by continually bringing him back to his own origins.

Examining Taran as an American hero places the emphasis heavily on the fourth book in the series, the chronicle that is the furthest from Alexander's Welsh sources and the closest to the pattern of the Campbellian hero. Norma Bagnall, in "An American Hero in Wales: The Mabinogion, Alan Garner, and Lloyd Alexander," contends that Taran is decidedly American, and suggests that the major difference between Garner and Alexander in their use of the Welsh material is that Garner's text is set in Wales and relies on the British sense of class and class distinction, while Alexander's chronicles are primarily about American maturation: "Alexander has put the classic American hero in the middle of ancient Wales, and it is his treatment of ancient story and the modern American hero which distinguishes his work from others writing from the same source" (Bagnall 24). By the modern American hero, Bagnall means the hero of the self-made variety, uncertain and inarticulate, but able to achieve greatness by virtue of his own character: "We, as Americans, can become anything we are willing to work hard to be, that humble beginnings do not prevent us from obtaining success and prestige, and that we alone shape our destiny" (26).

The final group of critics place Taran in relation to the figure of Arthur, a fact that helps reinforce the preparatory nature of Alexander's series. Judith Mitchell, in "The Boy Who Would be King," compares Taran to Wart in T. H. White's *The Sword in the Stone*, noting Wart's concentrated development and Taran's expanding consciousness. Just as Wart learns humility and compassion as he is transformed into various animals, Taran learns the same in his adventures. As the key point in Taran's development, Mitchell points to *Taran Wanderer* as a kind of "prose novitiate ...a book long vigil for the consecration to kingship" (Mitchell 126). Such a vigil is emblematic of the initiation into knighthood throughout Arthurian romance, and for Taran it becomes a book-long preparation for his role as war leader in the fifth book, as well as a further initiation into manhood through his encounter with the father.

In this comparison between Taran and Wart, Mitchell identifies the moral nature of fantasy in relation to kingship. High fantasy, in its broadest sense, represents a moral universe in which the hero overcomes the forces of evil and re-establishes the kingdom. In this way, the hero, who eventually becomes the king, stands at the centre of the moral universe. This fixity of moral vision, according to Mitchell, characterizes high fantasy and identifies Taran as a hero of fantasy rather than a hero of the American or democratic variety.

Lois Kuznets adds to the discussion of Taran in relation to Arthur in "'High Fantasy' in America: A Study of Lloyd Alexander, Ursula K. Le Guin, and Susan Cooper." Le Guin, Cooper, and Alexander, according to Kuznets, fit within the tradition of the romance quest, and she identifies the Arthurian development novel as the form within which these three authors are writing. Briefly put, the Arthurian development novel is Campbellian and offers a symbolic representation of the hero's coming to kingship:

> It depicts an adolescent rite of passage in terms of the quest of an unacknowledged son for the phallic sword and/or uterine cauldron or grail. These objects, and particularly the sword, will establish his true identity, enabling him to restore order and fertility (symbolized by the cauldron) or purity (symbolized by the grail) to a domain grown chaotic and fallow under the rule of his aging and enfeebled father. (Kuznets 29)

Kuznets acknowledges the American nature of Alexander's fantasy but points out that because of his subject matter he is forced to use a particular form in an ancient setting not his own, and a plot contained in a "romance structure where hierarchy was anything but democratic" (30). Because of these contradictions, she asks: "Are these sources finally too intractable? Does the medium alter the message?" (30).

v. Assessing the Critics

The question of what Alexander is trying to achieve with his *Prydain* series can be answered only in the context of the series as a whole. Taran may well be an American, democratized hero, existing in a genre which has its roots in myth and folktale, but there is more to be gained by examining the five books as a whole than there is in simply deciding Taran's place within this genre of high fantasy. Each of the critical approaches to Alexander offers something valuable about the series or about Taran as a hero, but only Lane and Stott look at the series in a developmental sense, while other critics isolate certain books and make a judgement about Taran as a hero without taking the entire series into account. For example, Helson, May, and Waggoner all place Alexander within the tradition of high fantasy. Helson refers to the *Prydain* series as archetypal fantasy, without saying anything specific about the books, while May spends time on Taran's moral development, and Waggoner criticizes Alexander for his didacticism. The series fits into the genre of high or heroic fantasy, but none of these critics accounts for the overall, forward movement of the series and the spiralling nature of Taran's development.

With respect to Alexander's Welsh sources, Lane's comment is the most astute in terms of what Alexander is doing with the chronicles, but it runs contrary to any claim that the chronicles are a retelling of the ancient Welsh sources. They are not. What Alexander engages in can be called, as Le Guin puts it, "literary sneak thievery," although Alexander's many borrowings from names and place-names seem more like barely restrained banditry. On the other hand, Alexander uses those various elements from *The Mabinogion* to tell his own tale of adventure, but his Prydain is no more ancient Wales than Tolkien's Middle-earth is Asgard of the Eddas.

Norma Bagnall is the one critic who makes the distinction between borrowing and retelling in her assertion of Taran's Americanness, which she does by explaining the difference between Alexander and Alan Garner in their use of the Welsh material. In *Owl Service*, Garner brings the ancient story of "Math Son of Mathonwy" into the present, relying on the relationship between Gwydion, Lleu, and Blodeuedd to form the basis of his plot. Alexander, on the other hand, never once tries to incorporate a major plot line from *The Mabinogion* into any of his books. He borrows bits here and there; he uses names, place-names, and even the attributes of certain characters, but never does he do anything more.

The question that remains is whether the *Prydain* series is an American fantasy or whether it is modelled after the Arthurian development novel, two seemingly exclusive points of view. Both Bagnall and Stott point to the value Taran finds in democracy and self-reliance, while Mitchell and Kuznets suggest that the focus of the series is on the preparation for and achievement of kingship. Alexander wants it both ways. Taran's experiences are constantly reinforced by moral lessons in hard work and equality, but the end of the series bears out the preparatory nature of the first four books. In examining the series from a developmental standpoint, we need to lean toward Arthurian rather than democratic development, but Taran's rise from Pig-Keeper to high king is not entirely characterized by a Campbellian journey toward kingship. By placing Alexander within a group of other fantasists from the mid-twentieth century who make similar use of Arthurian development as part of their respective series, we can see how the *Prydain* books make use of the figure of Arthur, and how the five books represent a process of initiation specifically masculine, by which Taran, Assistant Pig-Keeper, becomes the High King of Prydain.

vi. Taran and the Arthurians

Four other fantasists from this period make use of characters that develop in similar ways. Each character develops along the lines of what Kuznets describes as Arthurian development, and each incorporates social interaction and the construction of gender. At the core of this group are J. R. R. Tolkien and Ursula K. Le Guin, but Susan Cooper and Patricia A. McKillip make similar use of the Arthurian pattern. Tolkien's Aragorn, Le Guin's Arren, Cooper's Bran, and McKillip's Morgan reflect a particular form of development much like that of the legendary king.

In this way the development of Arthur becomes an archetype unto itself. In all of the retellings, Arthur comes to his throne in much the same way. Writers including Thomas Mallory, Geoffrey of Monmouth, Alfred Lord Tennyson, Rosemary Sutcliff, Howard Pyle, Mary Stewart, and T. H. White all represent Arthur's development as the change from orphan to warrior, marked by drawing the sword from the stone that identifies him as the High King of Britain. The magical stone and anvil are not always present from retelling to retelling, but the sword is always the key symbol in Arthur's recognition as king. Depending on the series, Arthur is depicted as either the heroic king of romance or the general of Roman Britain. Nonetheless, the basic archetype remains the same: Arthur comes to kingship with the help of an enchanter, and he eventually unites Britain against the Saxon hordes.

Alexander's contemporaries incorporate this kind of development into their respective series. In Tolkien's The *Lord of the Rings*, Aragorn is the renewer, the heir of

Elendil. He bears a broken sword until the ring is brought out of the Shire by Frodo, and he leads first the men of Rohan and then those of Gondor against the forces of the Dark Lord. Bran, in Susan Cooper's *The Grey King*, is, in fact, the son of Arthur born into a later age. He in turn must find a sword from the Lost Land and use it to drive back the forces of the Dark. Morgan, in McKillip's *Riddle Master* series, is the chosen heir of the High One and receives a sword and a harp as the Star Bearer, which he must use in his fight against the people of the sea. Finally, Le Guin's Arren is a prince descended from the house of Morad, the last king of Earthsea. He goes with Ged on a journey across Earthsea to discover why magic is seeping out of the world and is brought to kingship in his act of saving Ged in the Dark Land, or land of death.

In each case, there is a hero, a sword, and a destiny. Moreover, there is a wizard or enchanter, who plays a part in bringing the hero to kingship. Each of these writers has at least one character who comes to kingship by this process, but some have other characters who, in their own ways, help to reveal something about Arthurian development. Both Bilbo from Tolkien's *The Hobbit* and Ged from Le Guin's *A Wizard of Earthsea* endure a process comparable to Arthurian development. Neither becomes king, but both are involved in renewal and regeneration. Even Will from Cooper's *The Dark is Rising* exhibits qualities of the Arthurian hero through his initiation into the world of the Old Ones by Merriman. Alexander's Taran also fits within this paradigm, but the five books of the series are interesting not simply as Arthurian development novels but as an account of masculine initiation, one that carries Taran from adolescence to manhood. Taran does not have the mythic dimensions of the legendary king, but the five books suggest a process by which Taran becomes a renewer in the same mythical sense.

Bearing in mind Taran's place among these Arthurian characters, I want to set the *Prydain* chronicles against the three initiatory models I identified at the beginning of this chapter. Although Alexander's critics do not comment much on the developmental nature of the *Prydain* series, Alexander's place among his contemporaries and his use of what Kuznets calls the "Arthurian development novel" help to identify the initiatory nature of the series. Moreover, an examination of the series in terms of ritualistic, archetypal, and mythopoetic forms of initiation informs the series as a literary model of masculine development in the context of heroic fantasy. To demonstrate how the *Prydain* series stands as a literary model of initiation, I first need to place the books into the wider tradition of the romance. The romance, according to Northrop Frye, emerges out of myth and folktale, and Taran's development over the course of the series recalls the quest structure of the romance. In the next chapter, I place Taran's development within this wider literary tradition, while using the ritualistic, archetypal, and mythopoetic models to show how the *Prydain* series is an initiatory romance, whereby Taran comes to kingship by means of those same principles that govern cultural and archetypal initiation for boys. It is thus possible to see how Alexander's series stands as a literary model for the initiation of its focalizing character and how Taran's initiation over the course of the five books finds an expression through gender relations and constructs of masculine identity.

Chapter 2

Models of Initiation and the Masculine Context

The adventures of Taran, Assistant Pig-Keeper, are books of all-ages fantasy that represent a curious blend of heroic sentiment and American values. Disney's combination of the first two books into an animated feature film helped to popularize Alexander's series by including it in the Disney canon of classics. But despite its popular appeal, the series has a definite social function: the five books operate as a vehicle for the systematic coming of age of boys in a heroic context. Because of how each book represents a separate stage in this process, it is possible to read the series as a literary model of initiation that focuses on male development and gender construction.

Both cultural and mythopoetic approaches to male initiation have a direct bearing on Taran's development as a hero. Examining initiation as a distinctly masculine process in the light of these approaches reinforces the way in which Alexander offers his own variation on the initiation of the hero in a style of fantasy that speaks directly to the issues arising out of the initiation of boys. Three interrelated initiatory models form the basis for a discussion of Taran's coming of age over the course of the five books; however, these models only serve to partly explain Alexander's interest in masculinity and gender relations. The ritualistic, the archetypal, and the mythopoetic models of initiation offer an approach to this process from the standpoint of cultural anthropology, archetypal criticism, and masculinity studies. Each of these models offers a definable approach that helps to inform Alexander's series. Moreover, what furthers the connection between these models is how each finds an expression in the archetypes of myth and folktale. The *Prydain* books have a similar connection to these archetypal forms, but more indirectly through the literary form of the romance. By applying these models to the *Prydain* books, we can see how each chronicle represents a distinct stage in the initiation of Taran as a hero of fantasy: the separation of the initiate, the introduction to the world of men, the encounter with the feminine, the meeting with the father, and the realization of kingship. Comparing each of these stages to the ritualistic, the archetypal, and the mythopoetic models of initiation provides the groundwork for reading Alexander's series as a literary model of the same process in relation to other fantasists of the period. By establishing Alexander's connection to these models, we can then discuss Alexander's depiction of gender in the light of more recent studies of masculinity, particularly in relation to Alexander's American approach to high fantasy, a fundamentally British form. Alexander's war-time experience, as well as his distinctly democratic approach to his world of Prydain, allows for an examination of masculinity in an American context, while bringing the interrelationships among men and between the genders to the fore.

i. The Romance and Children's Literature

Alexander and his contemporaries use a literary form grounded in the quest narrative of the romance. The romance borrows many of the archetypes of myth and folktale and represents the literary antecedent to high fantasy of the Arthurian variety. An understanding of the romance as a literary form offers a place to begin a discussion of initiatory patterns in these works of fantasy. In *The Nimble Reader*, Roderick McGillis suggests that the romance is "the most important type of story for children" (McGillis 59). Alexander, Tolkien, and Le Guin have written books ostensibly for children, and the influence of the romance, to a greater or lesser degree, is evident in books by these authors over and over again. But the use of this form is often very specific. The aspect of the romance that most consistently appears is the quest narrative. Each of Taran's adventures begins as or becomes a quest, and Taran's adventure takes him away from Caer Dallben and returns him to the farm by the end of the book. In the first three *Earthsea* books, Ged searches for his shadow, then the ring of Erreth-Akbe, and finally for the lord of unlife. In *The Hobbit*, Bilbo joins the dwarves in seeking the ancient treasure of Thrane beneath the Lonely Mountain, while in *The Lord of the Rings*, Frodo seeks to destroy the ring of power that belongs to the dark lord of Mordor. The structure of the quest follows either a linear or circular pattern, one most recognizable to the child reader.

The reason why the romance is so germane to children's literature lies in the familiarity of the form. As McGillis points out, the structure of romance presents the child reader with a recognizable form to comprehend the world and to provide the kind of consolation to which Tolkien refers in his essay "On Faerie Stories":

> Romance is appropriate for children not only because its plots turn on adventures that tend to end happily, thus reassuring the reader that the world is, ultimately, human in shape and meaning, but also because in romance the structural patterns of myth are less displaced than in other forms of literary expression. Most books for children are romances with the sexual aspects displaced into respectable relationships between the hero and authority figures such as parents, wizards, wise old men, white rabbits, or kindly fairies. (51)

The displacement of mythic structures to which McGillis refers echoes Northrop Frye's discussion of archetypes and the romance. In *The Secular Scripture*, Frye identifies archetypes as the most fundamental and pervasive structures of literature. He says, for example, that the structures of myth and folktale are formulaic, "and the formulaic unit of phrase or story is the cornerstone of the creative imagination, the simplest form of what I call an archetype" (37). Biblical archetypes such as the fall from paradise or the dissolution of the world in water or fire, or nature archetypes such as the solar or seasonal cycle, resonate in myths, folktales, and the romance. He explains the process of displacement as the conscious attempt to adapt such archetypes within narrative, or "the adjusting of formulaic structures to a roughly credible context" (37). The degree of displacement in a given text, according to Frye, depends on where that text lies between the realistic and the romantic: "The realistic tendency moves in the direction of the representational and the displaced, the romantic tendency in the opposite direction, concentrating on the formulaic units of myth and metaphor" (37).

The process of displacement in children's literature moves such archetypes to the background of the main narrative, while the foreground is populated by more recognizable characters cast in a more realistic fashion. But displacement has a further function: according to McGillis, aspects of the romance such as aggression and sexual desire are those most often displaced for young readers. Such displacement allows the child character to sublimate these qualities in the face of authority figures, parental or otherwise, and "to accept repression both as a psychological and a social necessity" (71). McGillis cites such texts as Lewis' *Narnia* series, Montgomery's *Anne of Green Gables*, and Burnett's *The Secret Garden* as representative of such sublimation. But because high fantasy is closer in form to the romance, writers such as Alexander incorporate aggression and desire to a greater degree. Nonetheless, feats of arms and romantic attachment for Taran always appear couched in his consuming concern for honour. Frye's point about the direction of the romantic tendency in literature is certainly true for the *Prydain* books. His examination of archetypes and their displacement in literary forms such as the romance provides a basis for the discussion of such patterns in Alexander, as well as a means of returning the discussion to high fantasy and the initiatory nature of the *Prydain* books.

ii. The Romance as Heroic Form

Frye sees myths and folktales as sharing the same form, both having a clear connection to the structure of the romance. In *The Secular Scripture*, he explains that the chief difference between myths and folktales lies in authority and social function. Myths are cultural stories that together form a mythology, "a large interconnected body of narrative that covers all the religious and historical revelation that its society is concerned with, or concerned about" (9). Myths therefore derive their authority from their social function within a given culture. He goes on to explain that folktales are more nomadic, moving from culture to culture and variously taking root as they migrate from place to place.

Frye makes the point that myths and folktales are structurally similar, and he ascribes the same structural principles to romance. The quest narratives of romance therefore represent a more displaced version of mythic patterns. Frye contends that the persistent nature of the romance, having its beginnings in Mallory's *The Morte d'Arthur* and Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*, and re-emerging in genres of the twentieth century such as cowboy westerns and science fiction, speaks to such a connection and its basis in fundamental human processes. He identifies the romance as one of the most popular and fundamental literary forms in English literature, being continually revived differently from one century to the next:

> Twentieth-century romance got a new lease of fashion after the mid-fifties, with the success of Tolkien and the rise of what is generally called science fiction. No genre stands alone, and in dealing with romance I have to allude to every other

> aspect of literature as well. Still, the conventions of prose romance show little change over the course of centuries, and conservatism of this kind is the mark of a stable genre. (*Secular* 5)

The stable nature of this form places it firmly within the tradition of English literature, and both literary and popular attempts to adapt this form further suggest its applicability to processes such as initiation.

For Frye, what lies at the heart of the romance and of many folktales is a consistent archetypal pattern. In his essay "Archetypal Criticism: Theory of Myths," Frye addresses the nature of this archetype, outlining two interrelated patterns: the quest and the slaying of the monster.

The dragon slayer myth is a structural archetype, while the quest provides the vehicle for the myth. According to Frye, the dominance of this pattern, what he defines as the quest romance, forms the connection between romance and both myth and folktale. He points to *The Morte d'Arthur* and the first book of *The Faerie Queene* as representative of this form. In Mallory, this form is most evident in the quest for the Holy Grail, while the adventures of the Red Cross Knight are Arthurian and move the quest romance to the level of allegory.

Frye divides the quest itself into three stages: the agon, or conflict; the pathos, or death struggle; and the anagnorisis, or the discovery (Frye, "Archetypal Criticism" 187). He explains that each of these stages sets the hero in conflict with an enemy; if the mythic structures are less displaced, the enemy, or villain, becomes more demonic, which has the effect of making the romance appear more mythical (187). The Agon makes up the largest part of the quest romance. It represents the hero's journey, his separation from the familiar, and his encounter with the supernatural. The central conflict of the quest romance is the Pathos, or death struggle, in which the hero encounters his enemy, resulting in the death of the hero, the villain, or both. The struggle is the penultimate moment for the hero, who often undergoes a ritual death and rebirth. Frye points to the dragon slayer myth as best representing the Pathos in romance. He identifies heroes such as Beowulf and the Red Cross Knight who battle and slay a dragon, and other stories that incorporate an enfeebled king whose daughter must be sacrificed to a monster. In each case the hero slays the monster, in turn followed by a symbolic rebirth and renewal of the landscape: "The ritual analogies of the myth suggest that the monster is the sterility of the land itself, and that the sterility of the land is present in the age and impotence of the king" (189). In this way Frye contends that the dragon slayer myth is a displaced version of a solar or seasonal myth, in which the dragon represents winter and sterility, while the hero represents the principle of renewal or rebirth. This renewal is the Anagnorisis, the discovery or exaltation of the hero, the third and final stage of the quest. Frye describes this stage as the ritualistic rebirth of the hero and renewal of the landscape, with a "new society rising in triumph around a still somewhat mysterious hero and his bride" (192).

Frye's dragon slayer myth follows the structure of the three initiatory models introduced at the beginning of this chapter, while the quest forms a fundamental pattern for the stories described by such initiatory writers as Joseph Campbell and Robert Bly. For Campbell, the quest involves the separation of the hero from home and community, heeding the call to adventure and crossing the first threshold into the supernatural realm; for Bly, the quest begins when the boy in the Grimms' story "Iron John" releases the Wild Man from his cage and follows him into the forest. Although the goal or object of the quest is not necessarily a key ingredient in the initiation of the hero, it serves as an effective vehicle for the process. The definite nature of the initiation tale distinguishes it from other quest narratives by focusing on the initiation of the hero rather than on an indeterminate goal.

iii. Initiatory Models

Three interconnected approaches that speak to the initiation of boys are the ritualistic, the archetypal, and the mythopoetic, and each has similarities to Frye's quest romance.

Both Brian du Toit and Mircea Eliade have examined the initiation of boys in a cultural and religious context. Taken together, du Toit and Eliade offer a ritualistic approach, while Joseph Campbell's archetypal approach provides a bridge between the ritualistic and the masculine. Robert Moore, Douglas Gillette, Michael Meade, and Bly are mythopoetic in their approach, but more specifically they focus on masculine issues in the initiatory process. Each of these models helps to inform Taran's development throughout the five books of the *Prydain* series, while those elements that identify Taran's initiation as masculine are the same that identify him as an Arthurian hero.

Whatever the means, initiation marks the transition from one stage of life to another. Du Toit and Eliade identify the cultural and religious necessity of such a passage and use examples from so-called traditional cultures to demonstrate the means by which such a passage occurs. Initiation ceremonies occur at a variety of stages for both men and women, but those rites specific to males generally involve the older men of the tribe, who bring adolescent boys into the world of men in such a way as to break the bond with the mother.

In *Configurations of Cultural Continuity*, du Toit emphasizes the role of initiation rituals in preserving the continuity of a given culture. The preservation of the culture is paramount in such rituals, and although du Toit uses examples of rituals in Africa, New Guinea, and Australia, he extends his discussion to groups in North America such as the French Canadians, as well as to political and cult groups, going so far as to include the Ku Klux Klan. He describes three types of initiation, all of which serve a similar function: life cycle societies, adjustment organizations or societies, and traditional secret societies. Life cycle societies recognize puberty as the time when young people formally enter adulthood. Such groups are more common among traditional societies, and initiates are separated from family before being reborn into the community following the ritual of initiation. Adjustment organizations are political or nationalistic movements that emerge when a particular group is threatened by governmental or societal forces. In linguistic terms, du Toit identifies Gaelic speaking peoples and French Canadians as representing such nationalistic movements. Secret societies are most often found in "traditional" cultures, in which membership in the society is limited by gender and characterized by ritual. Du Toit points to tribes from West Africa and traditional Amerindian peoples as examples of groups which incorporate such secret societies. But regardless of the group or the initiation, the focus in each lies on the continuity and continuation of the culture as a whole.

Eliade, in *Rites and Symbols of Initiation: The Mysteries of Birth and Rebirth,* also describes initiation practices within traditional societies, but unlike du Toit's concern for cultural continuity, Eliade places such practices in the context of "spiritual history." Initiation, according to Eliade, is fundamentally a religious experience: the initiation of boys into men has at its core the religious mysteries of the culture. Like du Toit, he identifies three types of initiation: collective initiations, which move initiates, both boys and girls, out of puberty and into adulthood; tribal initiations, in which groups or secret societies within the culture have rites limited to one sex; and individual initiation, in which shaman or medicine men are initiated by choice or vocation. In each case, the focus of the initiation is on religious mysteries rather than cultural continuity and centres on the symbolic death and rebirth of the initiate.

Joseph Campbell's examination of myths and folktales from around the world moves us from the ritualistic to the archetypal. *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* offers a carefully schematized look at the archetypal journey of the hero, examining folktales from a variety of cultures, including European, British, African, Australian, Polynesian, and North American First Nations. Like du Toit and Eliade, Campbell refers to ritual and religious rites, but he uses both Freud and Jung to provide a context for his study. Campbell calls this archetypal journey the "monomyth," and divides it into three stages: the separation, the initiation, and the return. Each stage is subdivided into a series of steps, through which the hero must pass to move onto the next stage, which in turn establishes a unifying archetype for the hero of myth and folktale.

Campbell's archetype is the most systematized and wide-ranging examination of these three initiatory models. He offers a form for the hero's journey, cutting across cultural and religious lines to create a touchstone for human experience. The monomyth does follow, in fact, a male line of development, but Campbell intends it to be more gender neutral than specifically masculine.

The mythopoetic approach to initiation is similar to Campbell's archetype, but Moore and Gillette, Meade, and Bly offer an approach more contemporary in its application and specifically focused on men's experience. Moore and Gillette, in *King, Warrior, Magician, Lover: Rediscovering the Archetypes of the Mature Masculine,* describe the process by which boys develop into men, identifying four archetypes central to boys' psychology and setting them against the four archetypes central to that of men's.

These writers are concerned with initiatory processes, and they make a distinction between boys' and men's psychology in terms of the wounding, often sado-masochistic nature of boys' psychology, which they set against men's psychology as both nurturing and generative. Making the transition from one to the other, or from the immature to the mature masculine, is the essence of what they refer to as ritual initiation. In their assessment of North American manhood and the ritual process, Moore and Gillette see a general lack in terms of ritual space and ritual elders, which results in boys initiating boys, and men "remaining fixated at an immature level of development" (13). They describe the contemporary nature of ritual initiations within such groups as urban gangs, which lack the poignancy and effectiveness of proper rites of initiation because of the absence of fathers or positive male models in the lives of these boys.

Michael Meade, in *Men and the Water of Life*, approaches initiation in a similar way to that of Moore and Gillette's, but he identifies "story" as the chief means by which men can understand initiation in their own lives. Through a series of folktales from Africa, Europe, and Russia, Meade examines men in their relationships with mothers, fathers, and each other as a means of addressing various masculinity issues. Meade re-tells such folktales as the Russian "Fire Bird" or the Grimms' "Water of Life" and provides commentary drawn from men's workshops as a way of illuminating both the stories and men's experiences.

Just as Meade's approach to masculinity is informed by myths and folktales, Bly uses a folktale from the Brothers Grimm as the basis of his approach. He draws on the cultural, the religious, and the psychological, but he uses story as a way of providing a contemporary context for the rites and rituals of male initiation. By using the tale "Iron John" and explaining the details of the story in terms of cultural and religious rites, Bly places the story in the context of a masculine process, identifying the pressing need for male initiation in the twentieth century.

Bly contends that stories like "Iron John" speak to the instinctual part of the brain, as well as the instinctual body. Each step in the story metaphorically represents a different aspect of the male process. He notes that a man can be going through these stages at different times and in a different order. His point is that as these various stages are entered and re-entered, the boy will mature into the man.

Male initiation, according to Bly, is predicated on the separation which moves the initiate from one level of consciousness to another. For the male initiate, this movement represents a shift away from the mother's influence and toward the father's, a shift which Bly refers to as "moving from the mother's realm to the father's realm" (Bly ix). Both culturally and psychologically, this shift represents a departure from the protected, womb-like world of the mother and the entrance into a world unprotected and dangerous. In "Iron John," once the boy releases the Wild Man from his cage, he is taken away from the protected world of the castle and out into the forest with Iron John. This Wild Man, covered from head to foot in long, rust-coloured hair, is discovered at the bottom of a pool in the forest by a huntsman and brought back to the king's castle, after which the king unceremoniously locks him into a cage in the courtyard. In ritualistic terms, the boy is the initiate, who will encounter the mentor, who will in turn guide him into the world of men. In contemporary terms, the boy, according to Bly, is any of the thousands of young men between the ages of fifteen and thirty-five, who for the first time are encountering what he calls the "deep masculine" in their lives. This deep masculine is Iron John himself, the Wild Man, the primitive male who crouches, waiting to be noticed, until the young man is ready to begin his initiation.

iv. Structuring the Initiatory Process

Bly's discussion of the story of "Iron John" is the most inclusive of these mythopoetic critics. Like that offered by Meade, Moore and Gillette, Bly's model is characterized by its interest in masculinity formation, but what connects these models is especially the basic structure of the initiatory process. All mark a passage from boyhood to manhood. The structure of this initiatory process can be divided into three distinct parts: the separation, the road of trials, and the integration of self, which is simultaneously a renewal of the landscape and the achievement of an integrated consciousness. The initiate must experience a separation as a means of beginning his initiation; he must endure a series of trials as part of the initiation; and finally, he must arrive at the realization of self, or an integrated state of consciousness, not unlike that state of kingship described by countless folktales from around the world.

These models agree that the initial separation for the initiate is the need to move away from the mother. The ritual practices described by du Toit and Eliade identify a clear separation from the mother as the necessary element in the initiation of pubescent boys. Even though du Toit's focus is cultural and Eliade's religious, both identify the boys' physical removal from their mothers as a way to begin the initiation.

Campbell, unlike du Toit and Eliade, identifies the initiate's separation from the protected environment of the home and entrance into the realm of the supernatural as the beginning of the initiation process. Conversely, du Toit and Eliade see the importance of the separation from the mother as paramount, placing the focus on gender in a social context rather than the generalized movement into a realm of supernatural wonders. Meade and Moore and Gillette point to the necessity of such a separation for the proper sexual development of men, while Bly describes the boy's separation from his mother in terms of having to steal the key to the Wild Man's cage, which moves the boy from the mother's realm to the father's. Whether the separation is literal or symbolic, the separation is the necessary point of departure for the male initiate.

Apart from this separation from the mother, what further characterizes the separation for boys is the wound, meant to literally and symbolically mark the cutting away of the boy from an old life. Both du Toit and Eliade refer to the wounding of initiates as the primary means of physically separating them from their mothers. The wound in the initiation of boys in traditional societies is symbolic of their death as boys, and this ritualistic scarring of boys serves as a permanent reminder of this separation. Such wounding is also central to mythopoetic initiation, insofar as the woundedness of boys and men remains an issue in the lives of many men. According to Meade and Bly, the wounds can be both physical and emotional, but they generally lack the deliberateness of ritual wounding within traditional societies. The contemporary man is scarred or wounded by inadequacy, failure, or by the lack of appropriate relationships with mothers, fathers, wives, lovers, or children. For Bly and other mythopoetic writers, initiation is the deliberate attempt to bring understanding and meaning to the wounds received in childhood and adolescence. Only in such understanding is the boy made over into the man.

Like separation and wounding, the road of trials or series of tests serves a similar function in each of these models. In each case the initiate must experience hardship and privation as part of his initiation into manhood. Du Toit and Eliade describe the time that initiates must spend alone, eating and sleeping little and enduring the hardship of weather and solitude as a means of making them full-fledged members of the community. Similarly for Campbell, the road of trials is experienced largely alone, the hero of the monomyth encountering various tests in the form of both male and female obstacles, who in turn attempt to arrest his progress. Meade and Moore and Gillette are less schematized in their approach to the road of trials, but they too indicate that the movement through the initiation process is characterized by hardship, and that the integration of the archetypes of boys' psychology is necessary and difficult. For Bly, the road of trials represents the young man's failure at the sacred spring, as well as his discovery of grief and kitchen work in the castle of the second king. Regardless of the model, the road of trials is meant as a time of hardship and suffering. It is here that the initiate encounters pain, isolation, and grief, symbolic of the pain felt by the movement from boyhood to manhood.

Finally, the integration of self or the renewal is the achievement of manhood in each of these initiatory models. For so-called traditional cultures, it is the acceptance into the world of men and being made into a full member of the tribe. For Campbell and the mythopoetic writers, the achievement of the initiate is symbolized by the boon that the hero brings back to the world, or more broadly speaking by the integration of the man's psyche, which symbolically becomes the renewal of the landscape under the king. The king, particularly for Moore and Gillette, is a generative force, which restores the land and brings order and prosperity to the kingdom. Bly's approach is similar in that the story of "Iron John" ends with the marriage to the princess and the appearance of Iron John himself, who bestows his blessing upon the boy, now grown to man. It is worth noting how this final stage forms a parallel to Frye's exaltation of the hero.

At the outset, what each of these models offers is a means for men to become integrated members of a much larger community. Regardless of culture or psychology, manhood is characterized in each of these models by community, interrelationship, and compassion.

v. Initiation and Story

The point that emerges out of the mythopoetic model is not to rely exclusively on psychological readings of stories to explain human development, but to recognize the clear relationship between story and experience. Joseph Campbell articulates this relationship in his connection between dreams and mythic archetypes in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*:

> Dream is the personalized myth, myth the personalized dream. Both myth and dream are symbolic in the same general way of the dynamics of the psyche, but in the dream the forms are quirked by the peculiar troubles of the dreamer, whereas in myth the problems and solutions shown are directly valid for all mankind. The hero, therefore, is the man or woman who has been able to battle past his personal and local historical limitations to the generally valid normally human forms. Such a one's vision, ideas, and inspiration come pristine from the primary springs of human life and thought. Hence they are eloquent, not of the present disintegrating psyche and society, but of the unquenched source through which society is reborn. The hero has died as a modern man, but as eternal man, perfected, unspecific, eternal, universal man, he has been reborn. (19-20)

Campbell makes extensive use of the psychology of both Freud and Jung to explain and reinforce this connection between myth and human experience.

Sam Keen, who sees the same connection between the personal and the mythical, adds an American, post-Vietnam perspective to the discussion of male initiation and those myths which help to inform manhood. Even though Keen does not present a comprehensive model for the initiation of men as Bly does, his comments on how men are shaped – psychically, emotionally, and physically – are worth noting. In *Fire in the Belly*, he describes how men have been transformed over five millennia of bloody history from hunters and gatherers into creatures shaped by war and military conquest. Keen refers to the effect that stories from various cultures have on those who hear them. Men, in particular, are physically shaped by stories about men, the modern myth of manhood shaping men for the corporation and the board room as much as ancient stories shaped men to meet the challenges of hunting and war.

Keen further comments on the nature of traditional male initiation, but more for the purpose of discussing men and war. He models his discussion of initiation around Joseph Campbell's hero's journey, referring to the separation, initiation, and re-incorporation as the three life stages of a man's journey. He also identifies the need to break away from the mother in the first rite of separation, but more for the purpose of separating the genders temporarily, as a means of immersing boys and girls into the mysteries of their respective genders. Socially speaking, Keen identifies four basic rites of passage: birth, puberty, marriage, and death. Only during puberty are the genders separated for a while in order to discover what it means to be a man or a woman, and what boys discover in that separation is that manhood is characterized by physical wounding:

> From the beginnings of recorded human history to the present day, the most important, tacit instruction boys receive about manhood is masculinity requires a wounding of the body, a sacrifice of the natural endowment of sensuality and sexuality. A man is fashioned by a process of subtraction, bisection, abstraction, being severed from the natural world of woman. We gain manhood by being willing to bear the mutilation imposed on us by the ruling elders. (31)

Wounding then becomes the imposition of what Keen calls a "social body" for men. Manhood marks the sacrifice of individual desires, and the beginning of the process of learning the myths, stories, rituals, dances, as well as the practical and social skills required in hunting and gathering, and the arts of husbanding, fathering, and fighting. At the same time, the full effect of the wounding of men, according to Keen, is evidenced by the bloody history of humankind: "Men are systematically conditioned to endure pain, to kill, and to die in the service of the tribe, nation, or state. The male psyche is, first and foremost, the warrior psyche" (37). In the modern world, this psyche translates into military training and the subjection of the individual will to that of the superior, which is the extreme form of tribal rites of initiation into manhood.

Much like Bly, Sam Keen writes about the initiation of men, but from a specifically American perspective. Such a perspective is useful in understanding Taran's initiation in the context of myth, but it does not entirely account for Alexander's representation of manhood as an American writer of fantasy. It does, however, speak to the connection between Frye's discussion of the quest, the mythopoetic approach to men and story, and Alexander's interest in story as a means of structuring experience.

vi. Masculinity and Social Structure

In spite of the applicability of the mythopoetic model to Alexander's series, the mythopoetic men's movement represents only a single and sometimes limited way to examine men's experience. Michael Kimmel, in "The New Men's Movement: Retreat and Regression with America's Weekend Warriors," states that writers such as Robert Bly, Sam Keen, and Robert Moore and Douglas Gillette base the central tenets of the mythopoetic movement - the father wound, finding the father, discovering the inner warrior - on essentialist constructions of masculinity that do not take into account the social construction of gender. Such an ontological, essentialist understanding of gender, according to Kimmel, reduces it to a "natural, biological reality" that fails to recognize the ways in which gender is shaped by society:

> The men's movement, therefore, misses one of the central insights of social science -- that gender is a product of human action and interaction, that our definitions of masculinity and femininity are the products of social discourse and social struggle. Being a man is distinct from being biologically male. Essentialism leads the men's movement to adopt a version of manhood that corresponds rather neatly with our society's dominant conception of masculinity -- man as warrior and conqueror -- and to suggest that this represents the quintessence of manhood. (Kimmel 4)

Thus, the men's movement tends to reinforce gender stereotypes, and focusing men's experience on myths and archetypes draws attention away from the fact that gender is also a construction that arises out of social interaction and conflict.

Kimmel objects to the mythopoetic men's movement on several fronts: the essentialist definition of masculinity, the separation from the mother in what he calls "the mother wound," and the "flight from the feminine." The separation from the mother is what characterizes the first stage of the ritualistic, archetypal, and mythopoetic models of initiation; it takes the initiate out of the world inhabited by women, moving him into an arena where he learns to interact with other men. However, the negative impact of such a separation, according to Kimmel, is the separation from qualities such as nurturance, compassion, affection, and dependence. The subsequent gender identification with the father results in the quelling of such qualities in favour of "independence, aggression, competition, and the capacity to control and dominate" (8). For many men, embracing the masculine constitutes a movement away from connectedness into "alienation and pain." This alienation feeds into what Kimmel refers to as the "flight from the feminine." Kimmel suggests that the rejection of feminism by the men's movement comes from those men tired of feeling blamed for social problems such as war, domestic violence, and rape.

The shedding of the boy's gender identification with the mother lies at the heart of what Kimmel sees problematic with the men's movement. This is the "mother wound," standing in sharp contrast to what Bly, Meade, and Moore and Gillette call the father wound, which in its own way lies at the heart of the mythopoetic model of initiation. Kimmel's solution to healing the mother wound is eminently practical, and is available to men in the form of the everyday, domestic tasks of cleaning house and caring for children: "Cleaning the toilet, ironing, or washing dishes are not romantic--you don't have to be a 'golden eagle' to keep your nest clean. But they are the everyday stuff of nurture and care. They are skills that are learned, not received by divine revelation after howling at the moon in the forest" (9). Kimmel's point about men engaging in such "social practices" represents the opportunity for men to take part in their own emotional lives and break through traditional gender roles without having to leave on retreat for the weekend.

Separation for Kimmel is therefore not the necessary first step of the initiation of the hero, but a renunciation of elements that the boy perceives to embody weakness, emotional attachment, and the feminine. Perhaps the best explanation of what the boy is entering into comes from Robert Connell, in "The Social Organization of Masculinity." Connell contends that, according to the current western gender order, masculinity cannot be reduced to a single type, and that the recognition of multiple masculinities is necessary to understand how men of different racial and class backgrounds interact. However, he points out that it is possible to speak of black masculinity or working class masculinity, and that attempting to rigidly define such categories amounts to an oversimplification. Gay masculinity, for example, is not confined to white, middle class men. What Connell proposes is a structure of masculinity that represents variation and interaction, wherein these multiple masculinities are defined in relation to one another.

According to Connell, the social structure of masculinity involves several distinct levels: hegemony, subordination, complicity, and marginalization. Each of these structures interacts with the other, but all other forms of masculinity are subject to the established hegemony:

> The concept of 'hegemony,' deriving from Antonio Gramsci's analysis of class relations, refers to the patriarchal dividend, cultural dynamic by which a group claims and sustains a leading position in social life. At any given time, one form of masculinity rather than others is culturally exalted. Hegemonic masculinity can be defined as the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women. (38-39)

This hegemony is both exclusive and elusive. It is also subject to change and does not constitute a fixed form of masculinity. It does, however, recognize the dominance of certain masculine qualities that belong largely to white, middle class men. Hegemony, according to Connell, is characterized by a claim to authority, bringing together "cultural ideal and institutional power" (39). In this way, he suggests that business, the government, and the military represent a standard for masculinity. However, even if the hegemony does not represent a concrete group of individuals, it does represent a mode of thinking among many men that excludes those men who fall outside the bounds of the hegemonic project. Thus, homosexual men remain subordinate to the hegemony (heterosexual men) as those who most obviously embody feminine qualities.

Apart from those men directly subordinated by the hegemony, Connell addresses those men who feel themselves outside the centre of power, but whose behaviour helps to reaffirm and legitimize the domination of men. He calls this complicit masculinity, whereby such men benefit from an existing patriarchal order while remaining outside hegemonic control:

> Marriage, fatherhood and community life often involve extensive compromises with women rather than naked domination or an uncontested display of authority. A great many men who draw the patriarchal dividend also respect their wives and mothers, are never violent towards women, do their accustomed share of the housework, bring home the family wage, and can easily convince themselves that feminists must be bra-burning extremists. (41)

In this way, a large segment of men can feel exempt from patriarchal domination while at the same time complicit in that which they make a show of opposing. Such a show is nothing less than the passive support of patriarchy.

The final category in Connell's structure of masculinity is marginalization. This involves class and race in relation to gender, wherein masculinity is defined by the interplay between the hegemony and various identifiable groups of men (working class men, African-American men in the United States, first nations men in Canada). Such groups are not granted any form of authority by the hegemony; however, the hegemony is defined by its relationship to such groups as much as these marginalised men are defined by the hegemony. For example, Connell explains that in the United States a "black" athlete may stand as an exemplar for hegemonic masculinity, but such recognition does not ascribe "social authority" to African-American men as a group. Authority remains with the hegemony, while marginalised groups remain subject to it.

It is important to note that Connell presents this structure as a means of discussing relationships among men. He says that these relationships are dynamic and variable, and what is most important in understanding the construction of masculinity is the nature of multiple masculinities in relation to one another: "I emphasize that terms such as 'hegemonic masculinity' and 'marginalised masculinities' name not fixed character types but configurations of practice generated in particular situations in a changing structure of relationships. Any theory of masculinity worth having must give an account of this process of change" (42).

vii. American Men, American Fantasy

Sam Keen's comments on the socialization of men and men's bodies serve as a bridge between the mythopoetic writers and Robert Connell's social structure of masculinity, and it is Alexander's Americanness that helps to close the gap. The ritualistic, the archetypal, and the mythopoetic models of initiation address Taran's development over the course of the five books, but it is Alexander's Americanness that makes this series unusual. Taran's understanding of what it is to be a man comes as much from an American understanding of manhood as it does a mythopoetic.

Michael Kimmel, in *Manhood in America: A Cultural History*, identifies three ideals of manhood that existed at the turn of nineteenth century America. The Genteel Patriarch and the Heroic Artisan are two American types imported from Europe, and that find a parallel in the secondary characters who populate Alexander's series. According to Kimmel, the Genteel Patriarch is an ideal of manhood, both benevolent and authoritative, that found a foothold in the colonies of the Americas:

> At his best, the Genteel Patriarch represents a dignified aristocratic manhood, committed to the British upper-class code of honor and to well-rounded character, with exquisite tastes and manners and refined sensibilities. To the Genteel Patriarch, manhood meant property ownership and a benevolent patriarchal authority at home, including the moral instruction of his sons. A Christian gentleman, the Genteel Patriarch embodied love, kindness, duty, and compassion, exhibited through philanthropic work, church activities, and deep involvement with his family. (16)

Kimmel identifies Thomas Jefferson and George Washington as representative of the Genteel Patriarch, and many of his qualities such as kindness and duty find their way into Alexander's series.

Kimmel's second ideal of manhood, the Heroic Artisan, finds a more definite expression in the chronicles, but this type is much more germane to the fourth book in Alexander's series than any of the others. Kimmel explains that this hard-working counterpart to the Genteel Patriarch is no less an ideal of American manhood: "Independent, virtuous, and honest, the Heroic Artisan is stiffly formal in his manners with women, stalwart and loyal to his male comrades. On the family farm or in his urban crafts shop, he was an honest toiler, unafraid of hard work, proud of his craftsmanship and self-reliance" (17). Our first introduction to such an archetype in Alexander is Coll, the solid turnip farmer who stands as mentor to Taran. Where we find this character most often is among the people of the Free Commots, a region of free farmers and artisans who owe their allegiance to no one.

Both of these ideals inform Alexander's series, but it is Kimmel's third ideal of American manhood that informs its main character. According to Kimmel, the self-made Man is the one who came to dominate the American landscape. Just as the Genteel Patriarch and the Heroic Artisan had their counterparts in Britain and Europe, so did the Self-Made Man: "But in America, the land of immigrants and democratic ideals, the land without hereditary titles, they were present from the start, and they came to dominate much sooner than in Europe" (18). What the Self-Made Man had in common with the patriarch and the artisan was mostly self-reliance; he did not share in their nobler virtues. According to Kimmel, he was driven by the demands of a growing market economy and was by far the least secure of these ideals: "Mobile, competitive, aggressive in business, the Self-Made Man was also temperamentally restless, chronically insecure, and desperate to achieve a solid grounding for a masculine identity" (17).

Although Taran lacks the Self-Made Man's capitalistic qualities, he represents a displacement of the archetype, embodying the best attributes of all three of Kimmel's ideals.

viii. Initiatory Models and Fantasy Literature

How then can these archetypes of manhood be brought to bear on literary texts, especially on a fantasy series like Alexander's *Prydain* chronicles? Because of their connection to myth and story, each of the models offers a different means of examining Taran's initiation within Alexander's series, but the question remains as to the applicability of such initiatory models to literary texts. Broadly speaking, cultural and religious rites have a connection to myths and folktales because such rites form the basis of folk literature for many cultures. A cultural rite, such as the initiation of boys that du Toit describes among traditional societies, is a graphic re-enactment of the death of boys and their rebirth into manhood, but this same rite can appear in symbolic terms in either a myth or a folktale. Campbell, Meade, and Bly all focus on story as a vehicle for initiatory processes, and all of these stories in turn are grounded in ritual practices. The point of intersection, therefore, is story. It forms the basis for those literary genres which directly inform that of literary fantasy.

Ritual and archetypal initiation work to inform the folktale, but mythopoetic initiation serves to better illuminate the nature of high, or heroic, fantasy. Since the Arthurian writers in general, and Alexander in particular, fall into this category, the initiatory models of Meade, Moore and Gillette, and Bly have a direct bearing on this type of fantasy. High fantasy brings mythopoetic characters to life. Wizards and warriors abound, while the quest and the sword carry a distinctly symbolic weight. Each of the Arthurian heroes is a young male character who comes of age with the help of an older man. Each carries a sword, and each must come to terms with a father or father figure. Each of the mythopoetic writers addresses issues around moving from boyhood to manhood, meeting the mentor or guide, and confronting the father, and it is no accident that the same issues appear in these contemporary fantasies.

What makes these Arthurian characters masculine is the specific development of the central male character and his coming to kingship. For the mythopoetic writers, kingship is the achievement of manhood, and characters such as Arren, Aragorn, Morgan, and Bran all come to kingship by means of their initiation. Arren and Aragorn are recognized as kings, while Morgan takes the place of the High One, and Bran decides to stay in his own time and world and not return to fifth-century Britain. Arren's is a quest across Earthsea in the company of Ged, the Archmage of the school for wizards on Roke Island, until he fulfils the prophecy of Morid and crosses the land of death. Aragorn's is less a quest than it is a series of trials, by which he is eventually recognized as the new king by his own people. Morgan also experiences a series of trials, but they are trials set by the High One himself to determine whether or not Morgan can take his place as the High One. Bran and Will go on the quest for the sword of light, and it is up to Bran to use it in the final battle against the dark. Each of these books makes use of the quests to some degree, while all contain elements of romance, but the connection to men's experience on one hand and romance on the other is clear.

Lloyd Alexander's use of the quest and elements of romance may seem little different from either Tolkien or Le Guin, but what distinguishes Alexander's hero from the other Arthurians is the more direct focus on men and masculine issues and the American nature of the series.

Taran's initiation throughout the five books constitutes a series of quests that always return him to a central locus. The physical manifestation of that locus is Caer Dallben, the little farm that is like a pastoral refuge at the beginning of the series. As Taran begins each of his quests, he starts from the farm, moving out into the world to encounter specific challenges that initiate him into the world of men and warriors, until he returns to the farm and claims the kingship. In this way, the farm itself is transformed by the end of the series, becoming the new centre of power in Prydain. Taran assumes the kingship, and in so doing, he receives both the farm and the Book of Three, as Dallben, the Sons of Don, and the other companions prepare to depart Prydain for the Summer Country. Taran slays the monster and marries the princess, making him as much a hero as any Northrop Frye identifies in his discussion of the romance.

Taran's encounters with men throughout his adventures, especially those with the farmers and craftsmen of Prydain, brings the discussion of masculinity from the context of the romantic and the heroic to the American and the contemporary. Kimmel's Self-Made Man is much in evidence in the world of Prydain, and Taran learns as much from these exemplars of American manhood as he does from the heroic. Because Taran is an orphan in a heroic context, he is very much the hero of myth and folktale. But if the masculine centre of power in Prydain lies with the heroic, and by extension the aristocratic, by Taran's own admission he cannot become part of that centre until he discovers the truth about his birth, which in turn has the effect of marginalizing him for most of the series. But Alexander's vision of American manhood re-writes the traditional end of the romance. Taran is the self-made king. He rejects the exaltation that belongs to him as the slayer of the monster. He chooses to remain and restore the land of Prydain, not by magic but by hard work, and it is by this choice and his recognition of manhood as being more than the heroic of the romance, that Taran becomes king and marries the princess.

ix. Taran and the Literary Model of Initiation

Each of the five books in Alexander's series represents a separate stage of Taran's initiation, but Alexander's model can be divided into a three part structure: the separation, the road of trials, and the ascension to kingship.

In *The Book of Three*, the first in the series, Taran experiences his separation from Caer Dallben and his movement out into the world. Taran discovers a mentor in Prince Gwydion and learns about leadership as he and his companions attempt to warn the Sons of Don about the Horned King. Taran's road of trials spans the central three books and includes the development of the warrior, the encounter with the feminine, and the meeting with the father. *The Black Cauldron* continues Taran's movement out into the world, only this time his departure is much more formalized, as he is invited to participate in an attempt to wrest the black cauldron from Dark Gate. Taran learns about manhood in all its permutations and discovers grief and the poignancy of being an orphan and nameless. This second of the chronicles is darker in tone and reveals manhood in the context of sacrifice, betrayal, loyalty, revenge, ambition, cruelty, and kindness. Most important, Taran learns the distinction between what it is to be a soldier and what it is to be a warrior.

The Castle of Llyr, the third book, is problematic: it introduces Taran to the search for the feminine, but this search is as literal as it is symbolic, and it represents Taran's encounter with both the archetypal and the erotic feminine. The feminine and the erotic also figure into *Taran Wanderer*, the fourth of the chronicles, in that Taran's determination to go on the quest for his parents is based on his desire to marry the princess Eilonwy. The book closely follows the pattern of Campbell's hero of the monomyth, and Taran loses his name and his sword before reclaiming both by the end of the book. He experiences a number of false father figures as he journeys across Prydain, but he also meets his nemesis in the character of Dorath, which gives new meaning to what Taran has already learned about masculine cruelty. Taran seeks to discover his identity, and he does, after a fashion, by the end of the book. The completion of Taran's initiation comes with his ascension to kingship in the final book of the series. *The High King* has Taran bringing his skills to bear in the struggle against Arawn. Taran exhibits those qualities that make him a leader and a king; however, his destiny as the king of Prydain is clear once he finds the sword at the top of Mount Dragon. Taran's final choices at the end of the book show him to be a man of compassion and wisdom, more interested in renewing the land of Prydain than escaping it. He has the opportunity to leave, but he chooses to stay and begin the work of restoration, embodying an archetypal, generative force that will heal the land.

Examining these five books in the context of ritualistic, archetypal, and mythopoetic models of initiation forms the basis for Taran's initiation into kingship. His initiation falls at the intersection of theoretical approaches to initiation and literary forms such as the folktale and the romance. Story is what forms this connection. Both the archetypal and mythopoetic models use myths and stories to delineate the initiatory process. What distinguishes Alexander as a writer of fantasy is his presentation of the five books in the series as a literary model of masculine initiation, following a process from separation through trials to restoration. Moreover, the series defines a literary model for a recognizable group of writers from the mid-twentieth century. These fantasists, writing independently of one another, were doubtless influenced by the same literary paradigm: that of the development of the figure of Arthur as he comes down through romance. Finally, what makes Taran unusual as a hero of fantasy is his Americanness. With the ideals of early nineteenth-century America informing his actions, Taran becomes a king unlike any of his counterparts. With this in mind, I will look at each of the five chronicles examining Taran's development as a masculine hero as he moves from book to book, and from Pig-Keeper to high king.

Chapter 3

The Separation of the Hero

The separation of the hero begins the initiatory process. In romance and high fantasy alike, the hero's adventure begins with a departure from home, from community, from the familiar; and such a separation is consistent with the archetypal, the ritualistic, and the mythopoetic models of initiation. Each of these models begins with the boy's separation from the security of home as a means of moving the initiate into something unfamiliar, potentially dangerous, and thus it is for Taran in his initial departure from Caer Dallben. In *The Book of Three*, Taran's initiation begins with his departure from the farm; he later meets the companions who will accompany him throughout the rest of the series, and he learns something of what it means to be a hero and a leader. The chief elements of this separation are his departure from the farm, the recognition of the wound, the meeting with the mentor, and the discovery of the sacred space. Taran's separation is less schematized than the ritualistic, the archetypal, or the mythopoetic, but each of these models in turn helps to illuminate the process as Taran leaves the farm for the first time.

The separation of the initiate in each of the three models is useful in examining this first stage of Taran's initiation. Not all of the models, however, have an equal relevance to Taran's departure. The archetypal separation of the hero, for example, is more generalized in terms of the hero's departure from home, or what Campbell calls the "world of common day," while ritualistic and mythopoetic initiations place the separation of the initiate in the context of the separation from the mother, the wounding of the initiate, and the introduction to the world of men and mentors. Taran's departure from the womb-like security of Caer Dallben suggests a separation that recalls both that of the archetypal and the ritualistic, and leaving the little farm moves Taran out into the world of men where his mentors can direct his initiation. In this chapter I will discuss each aspect of Taran's separation, and show how each initiatory model variously informs the first of the chronicles.

Taran's departure from the farm is as abrupt as that of a folktale hero, but this first adventure introduces a number of elements that will become important for each successive stage of Taran's initiation. His initial pursuit of Hen Wen, the oracular pig, as well as his later determination to warn the Sons of Don about the danger of the Horned King, recalls the quest of the hero of romance, while his sudden departure and wounding carry the weight of ritual; and although Alexander invokes the elements of ritual and romance to inform Taran's quest, he uses Taran's experience to bring attention to those same elements. Taran's quest is not that of the solitary hero. His introduction to the companions suggests Alexander's interest in a heroic model rooted in social interaction rather than in the isolation characteristic of Campbell's archetype. Taran learns something about the social hierarchy of Prydain, and he discovers that masculinity can take various forms and is not restricted to his preconceptions of honour and glory. In this way the first stage of Taran's initiation introduces him to gender in a way that deconstructs the stereotypes of romance, and to a community of companions who all contribute to Taran's first experience of the world beyond the farm.

i. Ritual Space, Ritual Death

At its most fundamental, the separation of the hero is symbolic of severance, which occurs within ritual time and ritual space. Even though Taran's adventures are grounded in the traditions of folktale and romance, it is ritual that forms the substrata upon which such stories are built. The archetypes of romance as outlined by Northrop Frye are rooted in myth, but such myths are concretely realized in the ritual practices of pre-modern cultures.

Jessie. L. Weston, in *From Ritual to Romance*, identifies the relationship between the anthropological and the literary through the connection between ancient fertility rituals and the grail legends of Arthurian romance. She discusses at length the figure of the fisher king, the wounded and dying king whose life and death are bound up with the fertility of the land, and whose woundedness brings a barrenness to his kingdom that only the grail hero can heal, but whose origin reaches further back than the many variations of this story in English and French romance:

> [W]e now possess definite proof that at a period of some three thousand years BC the idea of a being, whose life and reproductive activity the existence of nature and its corresponding energies were held to depend, yet was himself subject to the

> vicissitudes of declining powers and death like an ordinary mortal, had already assumed a fixed and practically final form, further that this form was especially crystalized in ritual observances. (42)

The figure of the fisher king emerges out of the myth of the dying god but also out of ritual practice, thus furthering the anthropological connection to romance.

Weston discusses the cult of Adonis in ancient Greek society as one of the primary examples of the dying god in ancient ritual. Phoenician in origin, the cult of Adonis, according to Weston, believed that the death of the young god from a wound in the thigh was intimately connected to natural processes: "In fact the central figure of these rites, by whatever name he may be called, is the somewhat elusive and impersonal entity who represents an anthropomorphic form, the principle of animate nature, upon whose preservation and unimpaired energies the life of man directly and indirectly depends" (43). In this way the celebration of the death and resurrection of the god formed the basis of religious life. Such rites were celebrated at various times of the year, and invariably involved feasting, singing, dancing, as well as dramatic re-enactments, as a way of celebrating the death and re-birth of the god. The rites of such cults therefore represented a fundamental affirmation of life through a connection to both fertility and the religious beliefs of the society.

The religious nature of such rites carries over into the pubescent rites of other pre-modern cultures. Eliade explains the initiation rites for pubescent boys in the context of religious mysteries, such rites being at once intimate and personal, and forming an interesting parallel to such religious rites as those of Adonis. Initiation, according to Eliade, occurs within ritual or sacred time, and the ritual death and rebirth of the initiate emerges out of what he calls the cosmogonic myth, initiatory rites being a creative reiteration of this mythic paradigm:

> Initiation represents one of the most significant spiritual phenomena in the history of humanity. It is an act that involves not only the religious life of the individual ... it involves his entire life. It is through initiation that in primitive and archaic societies man becomes what he is and what he should be, a being open to the life of the spirit, hence one who participates in the culture into which he was born. (3)

Thus the primary tenet of ritual is the sacred. The ritual death of the individual recalls the celebration of the death and resurrection of the god in ancient ritual practice, and therefore inscribes initiatory rituals with the symbolic weight of religious mystery. The connection between initiation as a rite of passage and literary forms such as the romance is through ritual and the sacred. Whether in romance or in fantasy, rites of passage carry with them the resonance of ritual, and the hero is marked by the numinous quality that invariably accompanies such rites.

ii. The Separation of the Hero

Campbell's archetypal approach to the separation stage of initiation represents a more generalized approach to the hero's journey, but it illuminates Taran's departure from Caer Dallben specifically in the context of the departure of the hero of folktale. In his description of the monomyth, Campbell describes the hero's departure from the "world of common day" (30) and into the "realm of supernatural wonder" (30). The "call to adventure" summons the hero to the quest and takes the form of a supernatural intervention into the hero's life. The "refusal of the call," or the hero's denial of his destiny, follows the call to adventure. Supernatural aid, or the appearance of the herald, moves the initiate toward the crossing of the first threshold, which often takes the form of a movement from one landscape to another. Campbell calls the final step in achieving separation "the belly of the whale" (36) or "the passage into the realm of night" (36), wherein the hero's initiation begins.

Campbell's description of the beginning of the hero's initiation as an entrance into the "belly of the whale" is a symbolic means of representing the ritual death of the hero. The allusion is Biblical, referring to Jonah's three days in the belly of the fish sent by God to punish Jonah for his disobedience. Jonah prays for three days inside the belly of the fish, until God hears his prayers and causes the fish to vomit forth Jonah onto the dry land. The story of Jonah suggests a descent into an underworld, a deliverance, and resurrection. Such a process further recalls Weston's comments on the cult of the dying god in ancient Greece: the death of Adonis, the sterility of the land that follows from his death, and his subsequent resurrection and renewal of the landscape. More specifically, the descent into the "belly of the whale" finds a counterpoint in Eliade's description of the ritual tortures inflicted upon the initiate during initiation ceremonies: “the tortures are equivalent to a ritual death. The blows that the novice receives, the insect bites, the itching caused by the poisonous plants, the mutilations, all these forms of torture signify precisely that he is killed by the mythical animal, which is the master of the initiation, that he is torn to pieces and crushed in its maw, ‘digested’ in its belly” (35). Eliade goes on to explain that the ritual hut where these tortures take place is often symbolic of the body of a monster, such as a crocodile or snake. Thus whether it is archetypal or ritualistic, the body of the monster becomes that place of ritual death for the initiate, wherein he must suffer before re-emerging into the world.

The initial separation of the folktale hero is accomplished by an external force, a helper or guide, who brings the hero forward into the unknown. According to Campbell, the “call to adventure” is marked by the appearance of such a guide, the herald, or helper figure, who can take the form of a magic animal, old man, or old woman, and who will help the hero to move beyond the world of common day. Conversely, the refusal of the call could prevent the hero from moving beyond the boundaries of his own life. Campbell explains the appearance of this figure by using the Grimms’ story of “The Frog King.” The herald is the frog that appears to the princess after she drops her golden ball into the well, and the “crisis of his appearance is the call to adventure” (Campbell 49). The generalized nature of the appearance of the herald and the crossing of the first threshold is evidenced in how Campbell is able to apply it to stories as widely differing as that of “The Frog King” and the Buddha’s renunciation of worldly pleasures for the spiritual world: “But whether small or great, and no matter what the stage or grade of life, the call rings up the curtain, always, on the mystery of transfiguration - a rite, or a moment of spiritual passage, which, when complete, amounts to a dying and a birth” (49).

In this way, whether the hero is forced, persuaded, or chooses to leave, the movement into the other world is facilitated by the herald, and it marks the entrance into a new life; thus whether it is old man or crone, talking horse or magical bird, the hero’s separation begins with the appearance of such a figure. Campbell further identifies this otherworld as that of the human unconscious, what Jung calls the world of archetypal images:

> But this realm, as we know from psychoanalysis, is precisely the infantile unconscious. It is the realm we enter in sleep. We carry it within ourselves forever. All the ogres and secret helpers of our nursery are there, all the magic of childhood, and more important, all the life-potentialities that we never manage to bring to adult realization, those other portions of ourself, are there; for such golden seeds do not die. If only a portion of that lost totality could be dredged up into the light of day, we should experience a marvelous expansion of our powers, a vivid renewal of life. We should tower in stature. Moreover, if we could dredge up something forgotten not only by ourselves but by our whole generation or our entire civilization, we should become indeed the boon-bringer, the culture hero of the day - a person not only to local but to world historical moment. (Campbell 17)

Campbell's herald shares a point of contact with Bly and the mythopoetic model of initiation. In the story of "Iron John," the Wild Man, a figure similar to Campbell's herald, is discovered at the bottom of a pool in the forest, after which he is brought to the castle and unceremoniously locked in a cage in the courtyard. But unlike Campbell, Bly introduces the initiation process with the recognition of a loss and the subsequent turning to an external force to understand that loss. He explains that after Iron John is locked in the cage in the king's courtyard, the king's son appears playing with his golden ball. The boy drops the ball, and it rolls into the cage of the Wild Man. Three times the boy returns to the cage of the Wild Man to ask for his golden ball, but the Wild Man refuses unless the boy will set him free. The repetition of the boy's request for the Wild Man to return his ball places the emphasis of the scene on the boy's desire to get his ball back and the condition by which the Wild Man will agree to return it. Therefore, the initial loss in the story is that of the boy's golden ball, and the external force that he turns to is the Wild Man.

Bly describes the golden ball as the radiant energy of the child, which gets lost, subdued, or diminished by parental and cultural influences. He suggests that contemporary men have sought this metaphorical golden ball in various places, sought it from wives, lovers, and what he calls the internal feminine, but this radiant, psychic energy, according to Bly, can be found only by turning to the deep masculine:

> The "Iron John" story proposes that the golden ball lies within the magnetic field of the Wild Man, which is a very hard concept for us to grasp. We have to accept the possibility that the true radiant energy in the male does not hide in, reside in, or wait for us in the feminine realm, nor in the macho/John Wayne realm, but in the magnetic field of the deep masculine. It is protected by the *instinctive* one, who's underwater, and who has been there we don't know how long. (8)

In many ways, the Wild Man in the Iron John story is much like Campbell's herald, but, unlike Campbell's separation, the beginning of the mythopoetic process is characterized by loss, and it is this loss which prefigures the wound central to the mythopoetic, initiatory experience.

In a more psychological vein, the separation of the initiate for Moore and Gillette comes with the movement from the immature to the mature masculine, both of which Moore and Gillette define in terms of four major archetypes. The danger in failing to move beyond the archetypes of boyhood is evident in what Moore and Gillette describe as the bi-polar shadow form of each of the major archetypes of manhood. Like Bly's, Moore and Gillette's approach is mythopoetic, but it offers a schematized look at the distinction between the immature and mature masculine, or what they refer to as boys' psychology and men's psychology. They further divide each of the four archetypes for both boys' psychology and men's psychology into triunes, each major archetype having its dysfunctional bi-polar, or shadow form, which represents "a psychological condition that is not integrated or cohesive" (14). Moreover, each archetype from boys' psychology informs its counterpart in men's psychology: the divine child becomes the king; the precocious child the magician; the Oedipal child the lover; the hero the warrior.

The important point to note about the archetypes of boys' psychology is that each in turn finds a counterpart in men's psychology, but the failure to achieve a proper separation between the boy and the man results in an adverse effect on the development of the mature masculine. They suggest that just as the archetype of the divine child becomes integrated into the king archetype in men's psychology, failing to integrate the shadow form of the archetype can hamper the development of the archetype in men. Such a failure invariably results in the inability of the man to separate from his younger self, which in turn results in emotional and psychological suffering.

Moore and Gillette's division between the immature and mature masculine helps to emphasize the nature and importance of mythopoetic separation. For Bly, this separation manifests itself in the initiate's movement from the mother's realm to the father's, a movement that also occurs within ritualistic initiation. Both literally and symbolically, the mother represents safety and home, while the father is threatening and unknown. In ritualistic initiation, boys must be removed from their mothers in order that their initiation to manhood can begin. Such initiation rites, according to du Toit and Eliade, occur at the time of puberty and represent a re-alignment of the boys to family and community, such re-alignment being necessary in order for these relationships to be appropriately restructured. Puberty separates the realm of the mother from that of the father in ritualistic terms, further suggesting the gendered nature of that separation. Taran's separation does not focus on sexual maturity, but it is similar to ritual separation in its abruptness. The border of the farm is the threshold to the realm of the supernatural, and Hen Wen is the herald, or the call to adventure, that will lead Taran out into the world. Separation, according to Bly, is not necessarily sexual, but the appearance of the Wild Man in the story marks a developmental change for the boy. Thus whether archetypal, mythopoetic, or ritualistic, the boy's separation is a developmental necessity, facilitating the movement from the mother's realm to the father's, from one world to the other.

iii. The Departure of the Arthurian Hero

Separation from home, from mother, and from security is the starting point for the initiate. Similarly, the separation of the hero from what is familiar is a common thread in high or heroic fantasy and has particular significance for the development of the Arthurian hero. The separation that most of these heroes undergo, like Campbell's archetype, takes them away from the familiar into the supernatural. The separation of the Arthurian hero is marked by Campbell's herald, which in almost every case is a wise old man who stands as mentor to the hero. In *A Wizard of Earthsea*, Ogion leads the young Ged away from his village of Ten Alders, while Ged himself serves the same function for Arren in *The Farthest Shore*. Gandalf brings both Bilbo in *The Hobbit* and Frodo in *The*

Lord of the Rings to the adventure, while Frodo and the One Ring serve as herald to Aragorn, who reveals himself to be the heir of Isildur with the appearance of the Ring, cut from the hand of the Dark Lord by Isildur himself. This doubling of hero and herald that appears in Tolkien's epic is also evident in Cooper's *The Dark is Rising* series. The figure of Merriman serves as herald to Will, while Will himself serves the same function for Bran. McKillip's Morgan, in *The Riddle Master of Hed*, is called to the adventure by the harper called Deth, who recognizes that the stars on Morgan's brow are the sign of his destiny. Characters such as Ogion, Gandalf, and Merriman are mentors, but their first appearance is that of the herald, thus marking the beginning of the adventure.

Like other Arthurian heroes, Taran's separation in *The Book of Three* is marked by a herald, but before Taran leaves the farm he must receive a name, which amounts to the formation of a new identity. Taran keenly feels this lack of name or title at the beginning of *The Book of Three*. As he stands by Hen Wen's enclosure, Taran complains to Coll, the old warrior turned turnip farmer, about how he will never leave the little farm, after having been told by Dallben that he is not to wander beyond the borders of Caer Dallben because of the threat from the Horned King: "I think there is a destiny laid on me that I am not to know anything interesting, or do anything interesting. I'm certainly not to *be* anything. I'm not anything even at Caer Dallben" (*Book* 18). Taran receives his name on the spot from Coll, who casually names him Taran Assistant Pig-Keeper. The flippancy in Coll's naming rankles Taran's pride and works against the seriousness and significance of names and of naming in other secondary worlds such as Earthsea and Middle-earth. Coll, however, is no Ogion, and neither is he Gandalf; he is a turnip farmer, practical to his solid core, and he names Taran with the thing closest to hand. Taran Assistant Pig-Keeper he becomes, and within a few minutes, Taran is running through the woods in hot pursuit of Hen Wen, the herald that will lead him into supernatural wonder.

The fact that Taran receives a name before he departs on his adventure speaks directly to the significance of names and naming throughout Alexander's series. Names are also significant for the rest of the Arthurians, and one need look no further than Ogion naming Ged in the cold waters of the river Ar to see the significance of naming as a rite of passage in Earthsea. High fantasy in general derives this characteristic from myths and folktales, which suggests that the significance of names and of naming is part of a wider literary tradition. Names often provide power over a thing or an object, such as the queen's power over Rumpelstiltskin or Ged's power over the dragon Yvode in *A Wizard of Earthsea*. Names can also be bestowed, as when the Elvenking names Mr. Baggins 'Bilbo the Magnificent' in *The Hobbit*, or when Gildor names Frodo 'elf friend' in the woods of the Shire. Taran, who will eventually become the High King of Prydain, must begin with a name, which serves to give him an identity and fix it for the rest of the series. In contrast to Taran and his naming is the secret name of the Horned King, who appears in the first of the chronicles. Hen Wen, the herald to Taran's adventure, holds the secret to the Horned King's name, and knowing this name is the secret to the Horned King's power.

The naming of Taran doubtless has ironic overtones, but he carries his name right through the five books of the series. Coll may be flippant in naming Taran, but his name is as significant as that of the other Arthurians. Naming in high fantasy marks a developmental change for the hero. Aragorn is named Elessar the Elfstone by the people of Gondor, a name foretold at his birth; Will is named Old One by Merriman, while Bran is named Son of Arthur; Ged calls Arren by his true name, Lebannen, before the two of them are about to encounter their enemy on the last isle of Earthsea; and Morgan is named the Star Bearer once he leaves Hed in search of the High One. Naming helps to fix the identities of these initiates in preparation for the tasks to come, and it sets them apart as heroes.

Once Taran receives his name from Coll, he is prepared to enter the world beyond the little farm. Dallben warns Taran not to venture beyond the confines of the farm, and this, like the forbidden objects of the folktale, shows exactly where the tale is leading.

After Hen Wen escapes her enclosure, Taran follows her into the forest and is at once in a different world. There is little or no design in Taran's departure. It is hasty, impulsive, and instigated by Taran's sense of responsibility for Hen Wen. The oracular pig frantically burrows her way out from under her enclosure, and Taran is knocked down when he tries to stop her. He follows her into the forest and is at once aware of its foreboding nature in contrast to the security of the little farm:

> The woods here were not thick, but shadows drenched the high tree trunks, and the sun broke through only in jagged streaks. ... The forest seemed to be holding its breath. yet there was, beneath the silence, a groaning restlessness and a trembling among the leaves. The branches twisted and grated against one another like broken teeth. The path wavered under Taran's feet, and he felt desperately cold. (23-24)

The forest stands in contrast to the pastoral farm, and the imminent nature of the threat Taran feels reaches almost allegorical proportions. In running after Hen Wen, Taran crosses a clear boundary, and in crossing this boundary he leaves behind the farm and the world of common day.

iv. The Wounding of the Initiate

In anthropological and mythopoetic terms, the wounding of the initiate is a way of formalizing the initiate's entrance into a new realm of experience. While the archetypal approach to separation involves a physical departure, the ritualistic model of separation involves the physical wounding of the initiate as a means of creating a clear break from the security of the mother. For du Toit and Eliade, the significance of the wound or the scar indicates that the initiate has made the movement into the father's realm, and the physical evidence of that initiation is symbolic of the entrance into manhood.

Du Toit's discussion of the Poro from West Africa best reflects the nature of male wounding in the context of the separation from the mother. He describes at length the puberty rites of the Poro, in which adolescent boys are summoned from their huts by the horn of the "devil," brought to a ritual space by masked dancers, and forced to endure a ceremony of wounding, follow by a period of physical privation and education:

> A raffia fence conceals a part of the bush where the lodge is constructed, and the masked dancers lead the novices to this raffia fence while their mothers look on. Each boy has secretly been dressed by the masked members in a shirt under which there is a bladder, filled with blood, and a plantain stalk. As the novices reach the raffia fence, one of the dancers spears each boy in turn and the novice falls down with the blood flowing and the spear protruding from his body. The dancer now

> picks up each limp body and casts it over the raffia fence where two other dancers (obscured from the women's view) catch the novice. The boy is put on his feet and told to run farther into the bush and at the same time a heavy log is thrown to the ground with a thud which convinces the mother that her son is dead. (36)

Such a ceremony, involving both the younger and older members of the community, represents the process of what du Toit calls intergenerational ritualistic transmission. This process lies at the heart of the survival of such tribes as the Poro, but, more importantly, such a ceremony is the graphic enactment of the initiation of boys into the world of men through physical wounding and the separation from their mothers.

For Eliade, the separation of the initiate is less a separation from the mother than it is a separation from the profane condition. Nonetheless, the separation from the profane condition is accomplished by wounding. In making their separation from the mother, Eliade describes how boys are ceremonially wounded as a means of marking the passage from boyhood to manhood. This wound may take the form of scarring, tattooing, or even having an incisor tooth knocked out, after which the boys are sequestered from the women of the tribe and instructed in religious mysteries by the older men. Like the Poro, the ceremony of initiation often involves preparing the sacred ground before introducing the adolescent into the tribe, before and after which the boys would spend time in isolation from the rest of the community.

Unlike du Toit's focus on ritualistic continuity, Eliade focuses on the spiritual death and rebirth of the initiate:

> The central moment of every initiation is represented by the ceremony symbolizing the death of the novice and his return to the fellowship of the living. But he returns to it as a new man, assuming another mode of being. Initiatory death signifies the death, at once, of childhood, of ignorance, and of the profane condition. (41)

The comparable point between du Toit and Eliade is the enactment of the initiation ceremony and the wounding of the initiates. In each case the young men of the tribe have moved out of childhood into manhood. With respect to the wounding of initiates, Eliade suggests that some physical evidence of the movement into adulthood is necessary for boys because the onset of the menstruation process is the physical evidence for girls. Thus scarring or maiming is symbolic of the secret knowledge that the young man receives upon entrance into the world of men.

As with du Toit and Eliade, Campbell describes the ritual wounding of boys among the Aborigines of Australia. Campbell is not addressing cultural continuity or religious mysteries, but those rites of passage which serve to conduct boys over a "threshold of transformation" (10). He describes in detail the ceremony of circumcision, wherein the men of the tribe tell the boys that "the great father snake smells your foreskin and is calling for it" (11). The boys try to take refuge with their mothers or a female relative, and the women ritualistically wail over the boys as a way of keeping the snake from swallowing them. This ceremony is similar to what du Toit describes among the Poro: the men seeking out the boys, who are protected by their mothers, and the ceremonial wounding, that Campbell calls severance, which is a rite of passage representing the radical departure from childhood and entrance into a new life. For Campbell, however, the severance of the initiate occurs within a specifically sexual context, which further dramatizes the separation from the mother and entrance into a new life.

v. The Masculine Wound

Michael Meade, in *Men and the Water of Life*, discusses the impact of wounding on men, and how this wound can also form the basis for healing. He describes in detail an African folktale, "The Hunter and his Son," in which a young man leaves his village with his father to go hunting. He is struck down by his father after throwing away a dead rat, the only game the two have managed to find that day. Here separation and wounding are less ritualistic than a deliberate act of brutality on the part of the father in the story. The young man journeys on to another kingdom, until he finds himself the adopted son of a king and must eventually choose between this new father and the old. Meade uses the story to talk to men about their emotional wounds around their fathers and the central place such wounds occupy on the man's psychological landscape.

Meade and Moore and Gillette take up the ritualistic and psychic nature of the male wound, but the masculine nature of mythopoetic initiation can be seen in Bly's commentary on the story of "Iron John." Bly discusses wounding and the wound at length in explaining what the boy is leaving behind and what he is entering into. When the boy in the story sees that the Wild Man has his golden ball, he has to ask three times to have it back. The Wild Man agrees, but only if the boy will release him from the cage. The key to the cage is kept under the queen's pillow. The role of the mother in the boy's initiation is similar to that of ritualistic initiation: the mother has the power to keep the boy from moving onto the next stage of his development, and, in effect, holds the key to the boy's initiation. This is graphically enacted in ritual initiation, where the women in traditional societies such as the Poro wail and clutch at their sons when the boys are summoned by the masked figures. The difference in Bly is that the boy in the story must steal the key to join the Wild Man.

The story does not tell how the boy steals the key, but Bly insists that the key must be stolen. The act represents an assertion of self that helps to separate the boy from the mother. Such a break is the kind of severance that Campbell refers to in his description of the circumcision ceremony, but more importantly it represents the movement from the world dominated by the mother to that controlled by the father.

The wounding of the boy's finger follows this separation in Bly's commentary of "Iron John," the same wounding that appears in the ritualistic forms of initiation. In the Iron John story, the king's son wounds his finger as he opens the cage for the Wild Man, and this wound helps to make the transition into the forest possible for the boy. Whether the wound is physical or psychic, the boy must endure the pain of that wound to make the transition into a new realm of experience. In psychological terms, Bly suggests that such a wound can stem from abuse, shame, alcoholism, disability, or disease, all of which provide a means for the man to get in touch with his emotional body. Whatever its nature, the wound is a source of pain and grief, but it is also a source of strength, and it both literally and symbolically marks the initiate's separation.

For heroes of fantasy such as Taran, separation is necessary in order to begin the quest, but it is also important in terms of a formative masculinity. At this early stage, it amounts to an expulsion of the feminine, a temporary expulsion in which the impulse for the male hero is to define himself in opposition to the feminine. Margery Hourihan, in

Deconstructing the Hero: Literary Theory and Children's Literature, sees the separation of the hero as such an expulsion, describing it as a clear break from the mother. In Oedipal terms, however, she describes the process of gender identification as a less than positive step in male development: "His identification also often becomes negative: he defines masculinity primarily in terms of that which is not female and does not have to do with women. This means that for a boy masculinity becomes a matter of denial of relationship as he differentiates himself from his mother, and a devaluation of the female on both the psychological and cultural levels" (159). She represents this separation in terms of a "private/public" dualism, in which the hero separates from the private sphere of women and enters into the public sphere of men. This dualism is similar to Bly's division between the mother's realm and the father's realm, but Hourihan sees this public, or male domain as one wherein women are devalued. Women appear to the hero as objects of temptation or objects to be conquered, and the public sphere becomes the place where the hero's formative masculinity is tested.

Michael Kimmel sees the public, or male sphere in terms of an arena for such testing, but he sees the process of gender identification in terms of homoerotic desire and not simply the expulsion of the feminine. In "Masculinity as Homophobia: Fear, Shame, and Silence in the Construction of Gender Identity," Kimmel addresses the Oedipal separation of the boy from the mother in much the same terms as Hourihan: the boy must separate from the private sphere of the mother and identify with the father. This separation, he says, is accomplished through fear. The boy must identify with the source of his fear, the father, which in turn enables him to renounce his Oedipal attraction to the mother. However, he suggests that this Freudian puzzle is missing a piece:

> If the pre-oedipal boy identifies with mother, he sees the world through mother's eyes. Thus, when he confronts father during his great Oedipal crisis, he experiences a split vision: He sees his father as his mother sees his father, with a combination of awe, wonder, terror, and desire. He simultaneously sees the father as he, the boy, would like to see him - as the object not of desire but of emulation. Repudiating mother and identifying with father only partially answers his dilemma. What is he to do with that homoerotic desire, the desire he felt because

> he saw father the way that his mother saw father? (277)

In this way separation begins the process of gender identification for the boy, while at the same time that process is problematised by homoerotic desire in the public sphere. Kimmel further suggests that even without a Freudian reading of the boy's separation, the effect of that separation is to place the boy's emerging sense of masculinity under the eye of his father and other men. The male arena thus remains a testing ground, where every man's masculinity is assessed and evaluated by other men, and where heroes such as Taran must perpetually reenact their manhood in relation to their fellows.

vi. Severance and the Hero of Fantasy

The separation from the mother is less in evidence for the Arthurians, none of whom experiences the dramatic separation from the mother particular to the ritualistic and mythopoetic models. Both Bilbo and Frodo must leave the womb-like, luxurious hobbit hole behind, but Bilbo's mother is long dead by the time Gandalf appears, while Frodo is taken in by Bilbo because he is an orphan. Similarly, Ged, Morgan, and Bran are motherless, while Will leaves home in a series of adventures that take him across time and space. Arren, oddly enough, is the only one of these Arthurians who separates in any way from his mother. In a poignant moment of leave taking, Arren sits down on the docks at Thwill Bay on Roke and writes a letter to his mother, telling her of his duty to follow the Archmage. In a moment of boyish impulse, he runs back to the shop where he bought the ink and paper to write the letter and buys his mother a silver brooch to send as a parting gift. The lack of emphasis upon the separation from the mother among these Arthurian heroes is notable, but it does not discount the masculine nature of their initiation as a whole. Each model of initiation includes something about the separation from the mother, but most of these heroes, including Taran, are orphans, and as a result the influence of the mother must be read symbolically in terms of home or landscape.

Taran's separation is more archetypal than it is ritualistic or mythopoetic, but it has elements of all three. Taran is protected as long as he stays within the confines of the farm, and this sense of security characterizes the protection of the mother in both the ritualistic and mythopoetic models. Taran has no mother to separate from. Nonetheless, the farm of Caer Dallben, pastoral and womb-like in its security, is the place where Taran is protected from the outside world. In the departure from the farm, he is torn away from his naive understanding of heroism as he is thrust into a larger world.

For the Arthurians, wounding, unlike the presence of the mother, figures prominently into their development, and the way in which these works of fantasy incorporate wounding is often through the gaining of some secret knowledge on the part of the initiate. The hero is scarred or wounded to mark his passage into another realm of consciousness. Ged, Will, and Morgan all endure some form of physical scarring as part of their initiation, and for both Ged and Will that initiation represents a more formalized kind of learning. Ged, for example, chooses to leave his master Ogion on Gont and go to the school for wizards on Roke. This school trains those with power in the art of magic, and gaining the staff at the end of their training entitles them to the position of wizard. Although the recognition of Roke as the centre of power is contained mostly within the inner isles of Earthsea, the school itself is a formalized institution, which is bound by the understanding of equilibrium or the balance between light and dark. Ged's conviction of his own power while in his second year on Roke leads him to challenge Jasper, his rival. Ged works a spell of summoning on a midsummer night on Roke Knoll, calling upon the spirit of Elfarran, lover to Morid, last king of Earthsea, to appear before him. But Ged lacks the skill to control the spell, even though he has the power to work it, and he releases a shadow from unlife, a dark thing like a small headless bear that attacks Ged and tears at his face and throat. By releasing the shadow and violating the rules that maintain the balance between light and dark, Ged enters a new understanding of power that leaves its mark on his face.

Similarly, Will Stanton in *The Dark is Rising* experiences wounding when he is initiated into the knowledge of the Old Ones in the hall of the fire. As he tries to fight against the power of the dark as it presses against the hall, Will's arm brushes the sign of iron attached to his belt. The sign burns with a cold fire as a warning against the dark, and the mark it leaves on the inside of his forearm is the circle quartered by a cross, the same mark that adorns each of the seven signs. For Ged and Will, the wound represents an act of rashness for which they are both marked. Ged's belief that he can control a spell without the skill of the masters and Will's belief that he can hold back the powers of the dark stem from inexperience. The scars serve as physical evidence of that naiveté, and just as in the ritualistic initiation ceremonies described by du Toit, Eliade, and Campbell, the scarring of the initiate serves as both a physical reminder of the cutting away from adolescence and a reminder of mortality.

The initiations for Ged and Will represent the introduction to a formalized group, which is suggestive of both du Toit and Eliade in their reference to the initiation of boys into secret or gender specific societies. Both du Toit and Eliade refer to boys being initiated into groups specific to gender, and while Will's initiation is not specific in this way, the school for wizards on Roke is limited to boys and men.

Ged and Will are introduced to power: Ged to the skill and mastery of the nine masters on Roke, and Will to the power of the Old Ones through the Book of Grammary, a secret book of spells hidden away in a different time. Morgan is also introduced into a formal kind of learning at the school for riddlers, but Morgan's initiation is more that of the shaman described by Eliade than it is that of the adolescent. In his search for the High One, Morgan enters the hut behind the hall of the Wolf King, and Har proceeds to initiate him into the land lore of Osterland. Time takes on a peculiar quality in the hut, and Morgan moves between dreaming and waking as the Wolf King enters and re-enters his mind, giving Morgan the land lore he needs to find the lost wizards. During this initiatory time in the hut, Morgan receives the Vesta scars cut into the palms of his hands by Har. Because of the time spent with Har, Morgan is able to change his shape to that of the Vesta, the graceful, shaggy beast of the plain, and in this shape, he seeks out the lost wizards.

Just as it is for the other Arthurians, Taran's wound serves as a cutting away from his old life, but it also reflects those wounds described by Meade and Bly. Taran's wound is physical and emotional. He suffers because of his status as an orphan and his lack of identity, but his initial wound at the hands of one of the warriors of the Horned King lacks any ritual significance. Taran's status as an orphan suggests a wound that is emotional and symbolic, but he is also physically wounded soon after leaving the farm, which offers something of a comment on the nature of the masculine within the series. When Taran encounters the band of the Horned King in the forest, one of the men, "an ugly, grinning warrior" (*Book* 24), slashes at him with a sword, wounding Taran in the back and frightening him into running blind through the trees until he falls down in a faint. The malicious intent of the warrior stands in sharp contrast to the deliberate wounding that occurs within ritual initiation and further speaks to a particular mode of masculinity present throughout the five books in the series.

This malicious pleasure in violence is particular to the darker aspect of the warrior that appears throughout the chronicles. Morgant, who appears in the second book of the series, and who is a more humanized version of the dark warrior, is fully capable of this kind of brutality: he is determined, cold, and calculating, and his desire to rival Arawn only heightens his cruelty. Morgant is prepared to feed Taran's companions to the black cauldron in order to convince Taran to join his cause. Similarly, the cruelty of the huntsman in the second book, as well as that of Dorath in the fourth, represents the same pleasure in malicious, petty violence that Taran encounters on the trail when he follows after Hen Wen.

This cruelty is specific to the dark warrior, but it is also particularly masculine. By contrast, the cruelty of Achren, the enchantress of Spiral Castle, is neither reckless nor petty; she is as ruthless as Morgant and equal to Arawn in her desire for power, but she lacks the petty pleasure in violence that characterizes the huntsman or the amoral Dorath, both of whom appear later in the series.

The wound Taran receives from the warrior on the trail is initiatory, but it serves to contrast the communal nature of wounding in traditional societies. It is closer to that of Will's or Ged's insofar as it represents Taran's rashness and naiveté. Taran's emotional wound, on the other hand, derives from not knowing his parentage, not knowing who he is by birth, having dreams of being nobly born, and suffering because of his status as an orphan. He is conscious of the wound while still at Caer Dallben, but only insofar as it makes him dream of the glory of the hero and of doing great deeds. It is not until the second book in the series that Taran becomes acutely aware of his orphan's status. It becomes a source of pain and self-reproach that eventually drives him to seek his parents in the fourth book of the series.

vii. The Meeting with the Mentor

After he makes the initial separation from the farm, Taran goes on to encounter the mentor in the world of men. Each model of initiation positions the mentor to guide the initiate into a new world. Campbell's herald, appearing in the figure of a wise old man, serves in this capacity. Characters such as Gandalf, Ged, Merriman, and Deth all fulfill the role of the mentor for the Arthurian hero. Each guides and supports the hero as he moves forward into the realm of the supernatural, and each stands as a surrogate father in the absence of any other male role models.

Ritual initiation includes such surrogate fathers in the initiation of boys into men. Both du Toit and Eliade describe how the older members of the tribe have a role in bringing the boys into the community, performing the rites of initiation and later teaching the boys those skills and stories they will need to become full-fledged members of the community. This involvement of the older men is central to du Toit's intergenerational transmission, or continuation of the culture, and, for Eliade, serves the same purpose in introducing boys to the religious rites of a culture.

Mentors have a central place in mythopoetic initiation as well, and for Bly the mentor is Iron John himself, who puts the boy of the story on his shoulders and carries him away into the forest. The function of the mentor, according to Bly, is to help the initiate get in touch with his own potential, to discover and experience the pain of the wound, and to understand the nature of failure.

ix. The Arthurian Mentor

The mentor is a key figure in the development of the Arthurian hero, and the consistent nature of this figure suggests its importance in bringing the hero to kingship. Taran has a number of mentors influencing his development, beginning with Dallben and Coll, both of whom are concerned primarily with Taran and his safety at the beginning of the series. Taran's separation from the farm places him in the company of a mentor of a different sort, one able to recognize the potential of the initiate.

Once in the forest, Taran has two encounters that bring him further along into a wider world. The first is with the Horned King. Taran glimpses the masked and antlered figure before leaping out of the way to avoid the hooves of the horses, as the Horned King and his band gallop down one of the forest paths seeking Hen Wen. The second encounter is with Prince Gwydion, who is also seeking the oracular pig. These meetings stand in direct opposition to one another, for the Horned King is the literal and symbolic inverse of Gwydion. The Horned King is the dark war leader of Arawn, while Gwydion is a Prince of the House of Don and one of the protectors of Prydain. Both are cast in the role of the warrior, but the Horned King eventually becomes bent on killing Taran, while Gwydion stands, if briefly in this book, as Taran's mentor.

Taran does not meet the Horned King again until the end of the adventure, but this first encounter establishes the warrior in its darker aspect from the beginning of the book. According to Dallben, the Horned King is "as powerful as Gwydion; ...But he is a man of evil for whom death is a black joy" (*Book* 15). The Horned King has a secret name, which serves as a further contrast to Taran's naming at Hen Wen's enclosure. He is a warrior and war leader set against Gwydion, in the same way the Black Riders in *The Lord of the Rings* are set against Aragorn. Taran sees the figure of a man wearing an antlered mask fashioned from a human skull. He is, indeed, the dark warrior, rising almost to the stature of a god and suggesting a demonic parody of the horned god from Celtic mythology. Michael Moorcock, in *Wizardry and Wild Romance*, criticizes Alexander for using worn out motifs from Celtic mythology to bolster his secondary world, but such a comment falls short in the light of this figure. The Horned King is not a god, but he has a god-like stature, and he embodies the opposite of those generative, nurturing qualities that Moore and Gillette say characterize the king. The irony of this meeting is that Taran's first encounter with the mentor and the heroic is in this form, showing Taran what he wants to see in its negative form before meeting the Prince of Don.

When Taran first meets with Gwydion in the forest, Gwydion tries, indirectly, to ease the smart of Taran's wounds, both physical and emotional. Dallben and Coll serve in a similar capacity, but Gwydion is obviously the hero figure and has a greater impact on Taran's sensibilities. Gwydion is both guide and mentor. He almost immediately instructs Taran on what makes a hero and what does not, pointing out that, with respect to Coll, he has "never known courage to be judged by the length of a man's hair. Or, from the matter of that, whether he has any hair at all" (*Book* 34-35). Taran's astonishment at hearing about Coll's heroism in rescuing Hen Wen from Annuvin suggests Taran's naiveté and his inability to associate the heroic with the commonplace. Coll is, after all, a turnip farmer, whereas Gwydion is a war leader, and in spite of his rough clothes, his mud-spattered boots, and grey-streaked hair, Gwydion is a prince, a fact that Taran is able to recognize from Gwydion's bearing and his sword.

One of the functions of the mentor is to recognize in the young man the qualities of greatness as distinct from youthful arrogance or simple hot-headedness. Gwydion is able to recognize Taran's impetuosity, while at the same time he sees a quality that he can't quite identify. Sitting beneath the oak in the dark not long after their initial meeting, Gwydion remarks, half to himself: "'Is there a destiny laid on me that an Assistant Pig-Keeper should help me in my quest? ...Or, ...is it perhaps the other way around?'" (*Book* 31). Taran, of course, is baffled by Gwydion's words, but they suggest that the Prince of Don is able to recognize Taran's potential from the start.

As one of the Sons of Don, Gwydion is removed from other men because he is of a race of men from beyond Prydain in the Summer Country. He is at once grounded in the world of Prydain and yet removed from it. Taran's disappointment upon first seeing Gwydion suggests how Taran's own idea of heroism and of heroes is located in stories and the romance in the Arthurian sense, if we take the Book of Three to represent the ancient stories of Prydain. Taran himself is more akin to "these rough cantrev lords" as Fflewddur Flamm calls them, a breed both more recognizable in terms of the primary world and more adolescent than the Sons of Don, who are closer to legend and more representative of mature masculinity.

For Taran, Gwydion represents the heroic exemplar in Prydain. Gwydion is seeking Hen Wen to discover the secret name of the Horned King, but he appears only long enough to inspire Taran for the remainder of the book. Once he and Taran are captured by the henchmen of Achren, led by two of Arawn's cauldron warriors, he disappears from the narrative until the end of the book. Taran's encounter with Gwydion is certainly an encounter with a mentor, but Taran also sees Gwydion as a model who fuels Taran's own aspiration to become a hero.

Gwydion's commanding presence identifies him as both mentor and model, seen as much when he questions Gurgi as to the whereabouts of Hen Wen as when he confronts Achren in her hall. If anything, Gwydion is almost too much the exemplar. He lacks humanity in the confrontation with Achren, for he is not tempted in the least by Achren's offer to share in her power and rival Arawn. He scorns Achren's temptation, and in her rage Achren breaks his sword, amounting to a denial of both his manhood and his heroism.

At this point in his initiation, Taran is separated from his mentor and must assume some of Gwydion's characteristics to warn the Sons of Don about the Horned King. Taran spends a night and a day locked inside a cell in the castle, but he does not remain alone for long. He is rescued by Eilonwy and, once outside the castle, meets Fflewddur Flamm and Gurgi. Together these four become companions for the rest of the series. Taran remains in the company of one or more of his companions for the next five books, and whatever isolation of self and of spirit he faces, he is always in their company. Just as for the other Arthurians, as well as for the initiates in the ritualistic and archetypal models of initiation, the young man experiences the suffering of separation and isolation, but always has the help of the guide or the mentor to bring him through that separation

x. Taran as Newly Fledged Leader

The quest to warn the Sons of Don about the Horned King is Taran's first task as leader, and it amounts to something of a testing ground for the Assistant Pig-Keeper who is trying to step into the role of hero. Taran's companions help him complete the quest, but they also serve other functions within Taran's initiation, both as helper figures in the tradition of the folktale and as foils to Taran's character. Eilonwy, "one or two years younger than he but fully as tall" (*Book* 69), is Taran's superior, at least in terms of common sense. She is practical rather than erotic, a royally born enchantress whose common sense and flaring temper have the two-fold effect of undercutting Taran's heroic pretensions and making him aware of his orphan status. The princess is a more fully realized character than Fflewddur or Gurgi, and eventually serves as the catalyst for Taran's quest in the fourth book of the series. Fflewddur and Gurgi, on the other hand, serve a practical purpose in terms of character development throughout the series. Boyer and Zahorski refer to characters such as Fflewddur as "Dickensian" (15), while Elizabeth

Lane calls Gurgi a "redeemed Gollum" (26); nevertheless, as Jill May suggests, Fflewddur functions more as a character foil to Taran, while Gurgi incarnates the animal helper of the folktale. According to Boyer and Zahorski, Alexander's portrayal of Fflewddur Fflam is perhaps more autobiographical than based on Alexander's research into the Welsh bardic tradition, but the bard's antics suggest an almost vaudevillian character in a slapstick, Chaplinesque sense, and form a counterpart to those of Count Las Bombas from Alexander's *Westmark* trilogy.

Against these other characters, it is possible to observe a significant, if awkward step in Taran's separation. Once the companions admit that Gwydion is most likely lying dead beneath the ruins of Spiral Castle, Taran's language begins to change. As he tells the companions about his intention to carry on to Caer Dathyl, Taran makes a conscious effort to make his speech sound more formal and more archaic: "I shall journey to Caer Dathyl myself. I do not question your [Fflewddur's] valor, ...but the danger is too great. I ask no one else to face it in my stead" (*Book* 113). Taran is attempting to speak heroically, an attempt which occasionally lapses into a more colloquial, if not American, style of speaking. Responding to Eilonwy's claim that in earlier days the warrior maidens of her people fought along side the men, Taran admonishes: "'You'll make a fine sight–a little girl carrying a sword.' ...'It's not the olden days now. … Instead of a sword, you should be carrying a doll'" (*Book* 110). Taran spends the rest of the adventure struggling with his new mode of speech, but by the second book he is at home with the archaic manner of speaking associated with heroes such as Gwydion.

Taran's attempt to master the language of the hero breaks down in this first encounter with the opposite gender. Taran tries to assert some authority by using the archaic language of the hero, but he cannot sustain that language in the face of the tension he feels when speaking with the princess. Eilonwy asserts her own authority, as an enchantress and as a daughter of the House of Llyr, and her headstrong nature introduces gender as an active component in Taran's initiation. Taran's struggle with the language of the hero and the burden of leading his companions help to further Taran's separation, but the final point of intersect with the other models of initiation is his arrival at the sacred space.

xi. The Sacred Space

Ritual initiation, especially that described by Eliade, cuts the initiates off from the community for a period of time, during which they are instructed in the religious mysteries of the society, but Campbell has no comparable point of removal in the separation of the hero. Not until the hero's return is there an experience of the sacred space, and it is often manifest in the hero's refusal to return to the world of common day. For Bly, the removal to the pool in the forest provides the young man with the opportunity to experience wounding and failure in the presence of the sacred.

After the boy in the story goes with Iron John into the forest, he enters into the next phase of his separation: he encounters the mentor and guards the sacred spring. Bly describes the Wild Man as an "impersonal force" that exists to help the young man with his initiation, but in broader terms the Wild Man is the supernatural force that guides the hero away from the familiar into the danger of the other world. Iron John brings the boy to the sacred spring and tells him to make sure that nothing touches the water or it will be defiled. Three times the boy allows something to enter the sacred water: first his finger, then one hair, and finally all of his hair. Each time something touches the water, it is covered in purest gold, and the boy is forced to admit to defiling the spring three times. Iron John sends the boy on his way but says that he will come at the boy's call if needed. Thus the boy's experience of the spring is characterized by failure: three times he sits to watch the spring and three times he lets something fall into the water. But in that failure, his hair turns gold, and it is the hair of gold that will eventually attract the attention of the princess.

When Iron John takes the boy into the forest, he places him into the sacred space as a way of allowing him to encounter failure and potentiality in a defined and protected environment. The sacredness of the pool in the forest has antecedents in other mythologies, such as Mimer's well at the foot of Ygdrasil, the world tree in Norse mythology. Such spaces are also common in children's literature. They are less ritualistic, but tend to be characterized by a numinous or magical quality. Such spaces mark a pause in the hero's quest, a place where the hero can reflect and have time to gather him or herself for the next stage of the journey. In many children's books, this space is sometimes less magical than it is removed, as in the walled garden in Frances Hodgson Burnett's *The Secret Garden*, but such a garden is both Edenic and pastoral, and represents a refuge for the child hero. In the sacred space, the rules of the outside world no longer apply. It is sanctified, a place where chronological time is suspended: it is the House of Elrond, the forest of Lothlorien, the place of peace, the place that offers respite, the place removed from the world outside. Bilbo's experience of the house of Elrond in Rivendell and the house of Beorn near the forest of Mirkwood, Frodo's experience of Lothlorien, and Arren's time on the rafts with the children of the open sea all offer something of such a respite. Arren, in particular, is able to admit his failure to try and save Ged's life only in the dream-like setting of the rafts. Of the Arthurians, Morgan has the most deliberate experience of the sacred space. Like Eliade's initiates who learn religious mysteries in the huts of the men, Morgan learns the secret of changing his own shape in the smoky hut of Har, the Wolf King, after which he assumes the shape of the curved horns of the Vesta cut into his palms.

Taran's discovery of the sacred space in the form of Medwyn's valley and his subsequent exchange with the old man do not carry the potency of grief as does the scene at the sacred spring in "Iron John"; nonetheless, Taran's meeting with Medwyn is important because it identifies Taran in relation to his respect for living things and his connection to the animal world. He finds the chickens and the bees that disappeared from Caer Dallben, but more importantly he recognizes the peace and beauty of the valley as the tranquillity he longs for. Taran discovers the sacred space by accident. He has an affinity with animals and animal wisdom, seen in his letting Melyngar have her head as the companions are trying to find their way out of the foothills of the Eagle Mountains. The sacred spring is the place of testing: for the boy in "Iron John" to see if he can watch over the spring, and for Taran to see if he has the courage to continue in his quest.

Medwyn's test of Taran's determination to go on with his quest challenges Taran's maturity and his understanding of heroism. For Taran, acting heroically would be to follow his quest, and he is so bent on completing his task that he cannot fully recognize what he is leaving behind. In the story of "Iron John," the boy's compulsion to dip his finger into the water is to try to find some relief for his wound. Symbolically, the boy in the story is already encountering grief and his own woundedness, but Taran does not discover this grief until the second book of the series. In addition to Taran's discovery of the sacred space at this point in the adventure, he meets another of the many mentors he encounters throughout the series, and at the same time fully discovers his affinity with animals and the natural world.

As Taran sits by the lake in Medwyn's valley, he tells the old man about his quest for Hen Wen, and then about the death of Gwydion and how he is seeking to warn the Sons of Don about the Horned King. Medwyn, like Gwydion, is able to recognize something of the potential that Bly speaks of in "Iron John": "'If I read it [your heart] well, you are of the few I would welcome here'" (*Book* 152). Medwyn points out that if Taran chose the task, then he can also choose to relinquish it:

> From all over the valley it seemed to Taran there came voices urging him to remain. The hemlocks whispered of rest and peace; the lake spoke of sunlight lingering in its depths, the joy of otters at their games. He turned away. "No," he said quickly, "my decision was made long before this." (*Book* 151)

The longing Taran experiences in the valley is more characteristic of spaces such as Lothlorien and Rivendell, but for Taran the quest remains paramount. He still sees heroism as flashing swords and riding about on horseback, regardless of how much he recognizes the peace and tranquility of the valley.

What Taran does take from the encounter with Medwyn, and what helps to set Alexander's initiation of Taran apart from the other models, is a recognition of the respect for all life, a quality which manifests itself as an unconscious love and respect for animals, and one which he shares with Ged from the *Earthsea* books and Wart from T. H. White's *The Once and Future King*. The folktale hero is always kind to animals, and any folktale hero who gives animals food will be repaid ten-fold before the end of the story. But the relationship with the animal helper becomes more of an ecological concern for the Arthurians. Interestingly, both Medwyn and Beorn are vegetarians, at once reflecting a connection to the natural world, as well as the modern concern for the environment and the treatment of animals. Margery Hourihan takes this relationship one step further in suggesting that the concern for the natural world in such characters as Ged represents a challenge to patriarchal values and the "notion of mastery" (226).

Taran's attempt to help the wounded gwythaint is the act of a folktale hero and speaks to the modern concern for animals and the environment, while at the same time justifying Medwyn's reading of Taran's heart. After being drawn into the Fair Folk realm through the black lake, and finding Hen Wen in the keeping of the Fair Folk, the companions journey on to Caer Dathyl. As the companions travel through the forest, Taran discovers the wounded gwythaint, a messenger of Arawn. Taran insists on helping the bird, in spite of the furious protests of Doli, the dwarf who has been given the task of leading the companions to Caer Dathyl. Taran nurses the creature back to health, and the gwythaint tells Gwydion where to find Hen Wen and the companions. Thus when Taran is face to face with the Horned King, Gwydion is able to name Arawn's champion by his secret name and destroy him, a name that of course comes from the oracular pig.

xii. The Dark Warrior, the Wound, and the Mentor

The final flight toward Caer Dathyl marks Alexander's point of departure from the three models of initiation, but the confrontation with the Horned King brings together all of the aspects of Taran's separation in this first of the chronicles. Wounding and woundedness, the mentor and the dark warrior, names and naming, Taran's naiveté, and the significance of the sword all come together in the confrontation that follows Taran and Eilonwy's wild ride through the encampment of the Horned King. Taran is undone by the animal ferocity and evil of the figure before him and experiences again his despair and the pain of the wound he received at the beginning of his adventure:

> Taran swung about to face the antlered man. Dark fears clutched Taran, as though the Lord of Annuvin himself had opened an abyss at his feet and he was hurtling downward. He gasped with pain, as though his old wound had opened again. All the despair he had known as Achren's captive returned to sap his strength. (*Book* 204)

Taran's experiences of mentoring and sacredness over the course of his adventure are inverted in this confrontation. As the Horned King bears down on Taran, his cry of joy that has the ferocity of a snarl is the parodic extreme of the nurturing power of the mentor. The explosion of pain and white fire that results when Taran attempts to draw the black sword is equal in its effect to that of Ged and Will when they take power into their hands. Taran is not ready to draw the sword, and neither is he ready to face an enemy of the stature of the Horned King. He is saved by Gwydion, who names the Horned King with his true name, causing the antlered man to melt like molten lead as he explodes in fire, while Taran falls into unconsciousness.

The separation of the initiate marks the beginning of a process that will take him over the threshold of one world and into another. Physical wounding, hardship and privation, the appearance of the mentor, and the experience of the sacred space are all aspects of the ritualistic, the archetypal, and the mythopoetic initiatory models.

For Taran, the end of the first chronicle leaves him further ahead than he was at the beginning of his adventure. He has entered the world of men and has the wounds to prove it. He has met with mentors and discovered animal helpers. He has led the companions on a quest across Prydain and tried to take on the roles of leader and hero. He has had a glimpse into that place of refuge, the place of peace, which could just as easily keep him from completing his quest, but once back at Caer Dallben, Taran is most conscious of his failures. Alexander incorporates elements from each of the three initiatory models, but he highlights the movement from one world to the other through Taran's language, as well as adding a concern for the natural world.

The book ends where it began, in Dallben's study, with Taran's sitting on the bench across from his master. Dallben gently admonishes Taran for focusing only on his failures:

> "Though what you say may be true, you have cause for a certain pride nevertheless. It was you who held the companions together and led them. You did what you set out to do, and Hen Wen is safely back with us. If you made mistakes, you recognized them. As I told you, there are times when the seeking counts more than the finding." (*Book* 223-24)

This ability to lead will become one of Taran's most important attributes over the course of the series. More importantly, the old enchanter reminds Taran of the value of hard work and honesty, a sentiment conspicuously American, given the democratic turn that the later chronicles take, and given Alexander's use of those American character types whom Kimmel calls heroic artisans.

Dallben's comments find a further foothold in the tradition of the boys adventure, both from twentieth century America and nineteenth century Britain. One of the clearest examples of where this genre knits together masculinity and American values is in such books as *The Hardy Boys* or *The Rover Boys* created by Edward Stratemeyer. In his article "Desire and the Literary Machine: Capitalism, Male Sexuality, and Stratemeyer Series Books for Boys," Kent Baxter suggests that the basis for Stratemeyer's formula for his boys' adventure books incorporates mystery, the capitalist values of hard work and ingenuity, and the censorship of male desire. Baxter points out that Stratemeyer's formula for boys' adventure has its antecedent in the "rag-to-riches" stories of Horatio Alger; however, he distinguishes between Stratemeyer and Alger in suggesting that what makes Stratemeyer's books particularly American is the motorbike, the motorboat, or whatever latest commodity the boy hero is sporting and the object at the centre of the mystery:

> I emphasize these two characteristics of the Stratemeyer formula not only because they, arguably, differentiate the syndicate's books from those popular texts of the nineteenth century but also because this focus on the commodity and the retrieval of the stolen property at the center of the mystery plot tend to censor any expression of male sexuality in the main characters of the books. (172)

This same principle operates in the chronicles, if to a lesser degree. Taran learns the value of hard work and ingenuity, and even if the chronicles lack the commodity of the boys' adventure, the focus on the task at hand has the same censoring effect on Taran's desire.

The first of the chronicles may end with a hint of trite moralizing, but it brings Taran to a place where he can formally enter the world of men that lies beyond the farm. The masculine nature of Taran's initiation is, however, less evident in Dallben's debriefing at the end of the book than it is in the poignant image of Gwydion brandishing the sword after Taran wakes up from his confrontation with the Horned King, a gesture potent with masculine resolve. As Bly points out with respect to the sword and the warrior, the man who raises the sword demonstrates the nature of the sword, not as a weapon but as a symbol of strength and resolve at once protective and nurturing. Gwydion, standing in the chamber holding the blazing sword, anticipates what is to come in Taran's initiation, until Taran himself can draw the sword and make his claim to kingship in the fifth book of the series.

Chapter 4

The Hero and the Sword

The Book of Three marks Taran's separation from his home, and even though he leaves the farm in each successive book, his real separation happens in the first of the chronicles. To discuss the second stage of Taran's initiation, we need to examine the second, third, and fourth books in turn. Taken together, these texts represent Taran's road of trials before he comes to kingship in the last of the chronicles.

Each of the initiatory models characterizes this central stage of initiation as one of hardship and privation. It is the heart of the initiation experience and is the place of testing for the initiate. This central stage is also where Taran learns to interact with other men, and where he learns that manhood grows out of these interactions and is not founded solely on honour and glory. In the three books that make up the core of Alexander's chronicles, Taran experiences trials in the form of hunger, physical hardship, grief, and despair, and all in the context of masculine development. Taran is a boy wanting to be a man. His struggle is that of the initiate of myth and archetype who must pass through what Campbell calls "the belly of the whale" before leaving behind the immaturity of boyhood.

Unlike Taran's first adventure wherein he falls almost accidentally into the quest to warn the Sons of Don about the Horned King, *The Black Cauldron* formally introduces Taran to the heroic. He is a recognized member of Gwydion's band; he is assigned a task in the assault on Dark Gate; and he learns to measure manhood in relation to the men around him. In *The Castle of Llyr*, Taran must come to terms with women and the feminine in a variety of forms, while *Taran Wanderer* starts him on a quest for his parents and puts him face to face with the man who calls himself Taran's father. Each of these texts offers its own set of trials for Taran: the introduction to the world of men in a public sphere; the encounter with the feminine and the erotic; and finally the meeting with the father, which renders Taran nameless and wandering. Each of these texts serves as a testing ground for Taran until he can leave behind the immaturity of boyhood in readiness for the final assault on the Death-Lord and his ascension to kingship.

Taran's first adventure takes him away from Caer Dallben, but *The Black Cauldron* represents a more deliberate entrance into the world beyond the farm. In *The Book of Three*, Taran sets his idea of heroism against what he sees in Gwydion, and he tries to assert himself in terms of the language of the hero as he leads the companions on the quest to warn the Sons of Don about the Horned King. The second book in the series places Taran more directly in contact with the world of action and high adventure, what Gwydion calls the world of men. Here Taran is introduced to the heroic, and his role in that world is more formalized: he has a place among Gwydion's men and a task in the attempt to wrest the black cauldron from Dark Gate, the southern most entrance to the land of Annuvin.

More deliberately than the first book, *The Black Cauldron* incorporates both the traditional and non-traditional hero. The first book in the series establishes Taran's unknown birth, and he receives a sword before leaving on the quest for the cauldron. But the second of the chronicles is darker in tone than the first, and once Taran is introduced to heroes and the heroic, his initiation is specifically into a more public arena where he must interact with other men. He finds a dark twin in Ellidyr, discovers grief in the death of Adaon and the loss of the brooch, and learns the shame of being Taran, Assistant Pig-Keeper. As he learns to measure manhood against other men, Taran learns the depth of his own woundedness. Each of the initiatory models provides a means of scripting Taran's second adventure as a time of testing, while comments from Michael Kimmel and Robert Connell help to show how Taran learns about masculinity in a multiplicity of forms, about men and violence, and about how manhood is defined by men interrelating with other men. By placing both Taran's time of testing and what he learns about manhood in the context of the heroic, it is possible to see how Alexander is constructing manhood in a way that moves beyond the restrictions of archetype and the romance toward a new vision of the heroic.

i. The Traditional Hero

The figure of Arthur is useful in defining the nature of heroism according to certain prescribed elements. The unknown birth, the sword, the prophecy, and the renewal of the land represent elements of the traditional hero. The non-traditional hero embodies many of these same elements, but such a hero is characterized by a more complex range of emotion and social interaction, both of which move us toward Alexander's understanding of masculinity. In initiatory terms, *The Black Cauldron* represents the establishment of the traditional hero, while at the same time it incorporates a range of masculinities and their interplay within the public sphere.

To establish the nature of the traditional hero, we need look no further than the figure of Arthur as he emerges out of legend and romance. Events following the death of Uther Pendragon make Britain ripe for a redeemer, a king who has the strength to bind together the people of Britain as the island founders from the repeated attacks of Saxon invaders. In Mallory's account of Arthur's coming, Merlin advises the Archbishop of Canterbury to summon the lords and gentlemen of arms of the realm to a great tournament on Christmas Day, in hopes that God would show by a miracle who will be king of Britain. When these men emerge from prayer in St. Paul's Cathedral, they find a great sword thrust through an anvil into a four square stone of marble with an inscription in letters of gold: "Whoso pulleth out this sword of this stone and anvil, is rightwise king born of all England" (*Book I* http://www.gutenberg.net/etext98/1mart10.txt). The miracle of the sword in the stone speaks to the divinely inspired nature of Arthur's coming, and this scene is reproduced in both Rosemary Sutcliff's *The Sword and the Circle* and Roger Lancelyn Green's *King Arthur*. The specifically Christian aspects of Arthur's story are often downplayed in other retellings, but the divinely inspired nature of Arthur's birth and his coming to kingship is consistent with the various renderings of Arthur's life.

The divine, and specifically the Christian, manifests little or not at all for the Arthurians, but prophecy serves a similar function in associating the traditional hero with what is the operation of fate. In *The Lord of the Rings*, Aragorn's name as king is foretold at his birth, given to him by his people when he arrives at Minas Tirith during the battle of the Pelennor fields. Aragorn comes into the city after the battle in an attempt to heal Merry, Faramir, and Eowyn, all of whom are suffering a malady known as the black breath that comes from the Nazgul, the nine servants of the Dark Lord. Aragorn reveals himself to be the king by healing the three sufferers. "The hands of the king are the hands of a healer" (Tolkien, *Return* 142), says Ioreth, the old wife who attends in the Houses of

Healing. Thus, Aragorn is recognized as king by the miracle of healing. He is then given the name Elassar, or Elfstone, because of the green brooch in the shape of an eagle that he wears on his cloak, and he receives the name foretold at his birth by his own people. Prophecy works in a similar way for both Arren of *The Farthest Shore* and Taran. Neither Arren nor Taran knows anything of what is to come, and both unknowingly fulfill a prophecy that gives them the claim to kingship. Arren, called by Ged the Son of Morid, makes his claim to the kingship by crossing the "dark land living," while Taran receives the crown of Prydain by virtue of his unknown birth and his willingness to remain behind when his companions leave for the Summer Country. In this respect these two are similar to Arthur because the son of Uther knows nothing of his royal lineage until he draws the sword from the stone.

The prophetic nature of Arthur's rise to kingship is crucial, but just as important is the sword, the phallic representation of manhood and of kingship. In the various retellings of the story of Arthur, for both children and adults, the sword has a central place. Mallory, Tennyson, Mary Stewart, Rosemary Sutcliff, T. H. White, John Steinbeck, Marion Zimmer-Bradley, Howard Pyle, and Roger Lancelyn Green all place the sword at the center of Arthur's ascension to kingship. For Arthur, finding the sword is the mark of kingship, the acknowledgment of his birth that identifies him as the king of Britain. In this way, the sword legitimizes Arthur's claim to the throne and remains integral to the ceremony of kingship.

An interesting variation on this ceremony of kingship appears in Rosemary Sutcliff's *The Sword and the Circle*, in which Arthur receives the sword, not once but twice. The sword he draws from the stone serves to legitimize his claim to the throne of Britain in the eyes of the church and the barony, while his receipt of the sword from the Lady of the Lake serves a different function entirely. Arthur draws the sword from the stone, and he is eventually acknowledged high king of all Britain before all of the nobles and barons of the kingdom, a claim endorsed by the church and Merlin. This ceremonial crowning of Arthur is set against receiving the sword at the lake, a sword given to him by the Lady of the Lake herself. In this way, Arthur receives two swords, one Christian and ceremonial and associated with the world of men and of warriors, and the other Celtic and feminine and representing Arthur's claim to the world of magic and mystery, effectively binding the two worlds together. Regardless of the sword's origin, it remains the mark of the High King of Britain. In Sutcliff's *The Sword at Sunset*, the young Arturus receives the sword from the hand of his uncle Ambrosius, while in Mary Stewart's *The Hollow Hills*, the young Arthur discovers the sword hidden in a cave by Merlin, which is the sword of Maxum, the Roman general who marched on Rome after declaring himself Emperor of Britain.

For each of the Arthurian heroes the sword is symbolic of kingship, and is a necessary part of his identity as king. Aragorn has the sword of Elendil reforged with the appearance of Frodo and the one ring; Arren carries the sword of Morid, last king of Earthsea, when he arrives at Roke; Will and Bran must enter the Lost Land to bring back the crystal sword; and Morgan finds the sword of the Star Bearer, which carries the same three stars as those on his brow. For each of these four characters, the sword is a necessary element in their claim to kingship. It is a phallic weapon of violence, but symbolically it also represents the unifying force embodied in the figure of the king.

In the *Prydain* chronicles, the sword is an organizing motif that first appears when Taran and Coll are fencing with pokers at the beginning of *The Book of Three,* returning with each successive text until Taran finds the black sword Dyrnwyn beneath the stone on the top of Mount Dragon in *The High King*. His quest may not be specifically for the sword, but Taran's initiation eventually leads him to finding that sword, which validates his kingship. But Taran the High King of Prydain is a far cry from the boy who complains about having to make horseshoes at the beginning of the series.

Taran's entrance into the world of the hero is heralded by Dallben when he gives Taran his first sword. After the council gathers to plan the attack on Dark Gate and steal away the black cauldron, the old enchanter fishes about inside an old chest:

> 'I confess to a certain number of regrets and misgivings,' he said, 'which could not possibly interest you, so I shall not burden you with them. On the other hand, here is something I am sure *will* interest you. And burden you too, for the matter of that.' Dallben straightened and turned. In his hands he held a sword. (*Black* 24-25)

Receiving his first sword is unquestionably a rite of passage for Taran, and Dallben's cryptic comments as he hands over the blade anticipate the road of trials that will accompany Taran's participation in the quest for the cauldron.

The entirely utilitarian nature of the weapon distinguishes Taran's receipt of his first sword from the other Arthurians. It has no magical properties, and according to Dallben is nothing more than "'a bit of metal hammered into a rather unattractive shape'" (25), which "'could better have been a pruning hook or a plow iron'" (25). Taran, however, chooses to receive it as the weapon of a warrior and hurries off to the scullery to show Eilonwy.

Dallben's caustic comments about the sword suggest a subversion of the fantasy form, as well as those elements that characterize the traditional hero. Moreover, his remarks help to reinforce the neutrality of the sword itself; it is not that the object has innate powers but that it has power in the hands of the king. Taran will eventually receive the black sword, but it takes him the entire series to be ready to receive it. Alexander also glosses over the ceremonial aspect of the sword, which is all to the purpose of downplaying its symbolic significance early on in the series. When Taran bursts into the scullery to show his prize to the princess, Eilonwy sarcastically remarks on not wanting to gird the sword on him and enacting the ritual of blessing the warrior, but even in its absence this blessing suggests the ceremonial aspect of the sword and its owner that involves the feminine. Despite her protestations, Eilonwy girds Taran with his new sword, and Taran draws the blade and holds it aloft. This show of drawing the sword recalls not only the figure of Gwydion lifting Dyrnwyn, the black sword, at the end of *The Book of Three*, but Taran himself brandishing the poker at the beginning of the series. But the sword for Taran is not yet a ceremonial recognition of kingship, and neither is it the princely sword of Gwydion, broken by Achren in Spiral Castle. Nevertheless, it is the weapon of a warrior, which is how Taran chooses to receive it. He has the sword, but in many ways he still has to prove himself worthy of carrying it. He does not yet understand that the qualities of the hero are not simply in being able to wield the blade, and in the next three books Taran discovers what that means.

ii. The Archetypal Hero

Having entered the world of men, Taran must now endure the time of testing, which is the central stage of the initiation process. All three initiatory models focus on such a series of trials, and in each case, the ritualistic, the archetypal, and the mythopoetic depict this central stage of initiation as a time of testing for the initiate.

Campbell's archetypal approach helps to establish the figure of the traditional hero in terms of the structures of myth, as well as the archetypes of Jungian psychology. As is clear from Campbell's monomyth, the archetypal hero provides a grounding for the journey of the cross-cultural hero. Campbell's intent is to provide the basic structure for the hero's quest, which he then applies to heroes from myths and folktales around the world. Campbell's Monomyth--the separation, initiation, and return of the hero--is applicable particularly for folktales, but applies to high fantasy as well, and in particular the first, second, and fourth chronicles in the *Prydain* series.

Campbell's archetypal approach is much less focused on male development than either the ritualistic or the mythopoetic model, but his breakdown of the initiation of the hero in the monomyth is worth noting. In the last chapter, I discussed how Campbell's separation removes the hero from what is known into the realm of the supernatural, a period of trials the hero must undergo before his apotheosis. The initiation stage is therefore the road of trials, or the series of tests through which the hero must pass before achieving the fulfilment of his quest. The hero encounters various aspects of the divine as part of this time of testing, until finally achieving his apotheosis in the meeting with the father:

> The original departure into the land of trials represented only the beginning of the long and really perilous path of initiatory conquest and moments of illumination. Dragons have now to be slain and surprising barriers passed – again, again, and again. Meanwhile there will be a multitude of preliminary victories, unretainable ecstasies, and momentary glimpses of the wonderful land. (109)

Campbell applies this structure to the heroes of myth and folktale from Europe, Asia, and the Americas. Not all of these heroes will follow the exact prescriptions of Campbell's monomyth, but the variations are interesting and beg further examination: "If one or another of the basic elements of the archetypal pattern is omitted from a given fairytale, legend, ritual, or myth, it is bound to be somehow or other implied, and the omission itself can speak volumes for the history and pathology of the example . . ." (38). In spite of such variations, Campbell's monomyth crosses over cultural, anthropological, and religious lines to such a degree that it is one of the most inclusive theories of the traditional hero. But even though Campbell states that his monomyth is meant to represent a universal heroic type, it is most representative of the male hero, without necessarily being masculine.

iii. The Hero of Myth and Psychology

A worthwhile comparison to Campbell's prescribed hero is the discussion of the hero offered by Lord Raglan, Fitzroy Richard Somerset (1885-1964), and Otto Rank (1885-1949), the Vienna born Freudian psychoanalyst. Each of these writers offers a description of the traditional hero in terms of similarly prescribed elements, but each also focuses on those tests or trials central to the development of the hero.

In *The Hero*, Lord Raglan uses the term "historic myth" to describe mythical heroes, as well as characters such as Robin Hood or King Arthur who find a foothold in historical events. For Raglan, such characters are all factitious, and the impulse to historicize mythical figures in the same way which motivated so-called primitives, or what he calls "savages," is no more than an attempt to understand the universe: "The savage is interested in nothing which does not impinge upon his senses; he never has a new idea, even about the most familiar things. In this, he is like our own illiterates" (121). Raglan is referring to the uneducated masses who tell stories and who fail to make the distinction between figures of history and figures of myth. In this way, he accounts for the commonalities between legends, folktales, and myths.

The most interesting aspect of Raglan's account of the hero is his heroic checklist: twenty-two archetypal elements that validate the traditional hero. To summarize Raglan's list, the hero's mother is a royal virgin and his father is a king who is often a near relation to the Queen. The circumstances of the hero's conception are unusual, and the hero is reputed to be the son of a god – unusual in that he is supposed to be the son of a king. The father or maternal grandfather attempts to kill the hero at birth, but he is spirited away by the grandmother or a trusted servant. The hero is then reared by foster parents in another country but nothing is revealed of his birth or infancy. Upon reaching manhood, he returns to his future kingdom, where he is victorious over the king, giant, dragon, wild beast, or whatever else may stand in his way of assuming the kingship. He marries the princess, often the daughter of his predecessor, and then becomes king and reigns uneventfully for a time. He prescribes laws as the king, but eventually loses favor with the gods or with his subjects and is driven from the kingdom. Finally, he meets with a mysterious death, often at the top of a hill, and his children, if any, do not succeed him; his body is not buried, but he has one or more holy sepulchers erected in his name.

This extensive description of the career of the traditional hero amounts to a checklist to test the validity of the hero. Raglan examines a number of heroes, classical and otherwise, and how they rank on his list, including Oedipus, Theseus, Romulus, Hercules, Perseus, Jason, and Bellerophon, not to mention Arthur. Surprisingly enough, the hero with the most points, or having the most matches from Raglan's checklist, is the Biblical Moses. As a way of explaining such heroic types, Raglan contends that three possibilities exist: these various heroes were historical figures, whose stories were altered to conform to a ritual pattern; they may have been real persons in whose lives ritual played a predominant part, or they were purely mythical.

Raglan's checklist suggests that historical or semi-historical figures can be simply fitted into a pre-existing paradigm, and further presupposes that the hero be either the son of a god or that his birth has some divine involvement. Neither is true for Taran. He does not know who his parents are, and he spends a good part of the series trying to find out. The events covered in the *Prydain* chronicles span a few short years and focus largely on Taran himself. We can infer that the events surrounding the adventures of Taran have their own impetus and that Taran's choices during each of the five adventures are his own.

In *The Myth of the Birth of the Hero*, Otto Rank discusses many of the same heroes as Raglan, but he places the myth of the hero's birth directly in relation to various psychological processes, namely within the context of Freudian psychology. Rank describes the "family romance" – father, mother, and child – in which the true hero is the ego that identifies itself with the hero by reverting to a time when the ego was itself a hero through its first heroic act, the revolt against the father (81). Aspects of the infantile romance are transferred to that of the hero: "Myths are, therefore, created by adults, by means of retrograde childhood fantasies, the hero being credited with the myth-maker's personal infantile history" (82). Thus, for Rank, the heroic becomes an expression of the personal rather than the mythical or the historical, which does not necessarily require the intervention of the divine nor rely on historical events.

However, just as Raglan uses a set of criteria to assess the validity of his heroes, Rank uses a specific form to discuss the hero. He describes the hero cast off as an infant and raised by surrogate parents before returning to his own kingdom and murdering his father, a form which places the hero's birth and development within the context of the myth of Oedipus and the processes of Freudian psychology. Some of the limitations of this approach are in the direct correlations between the details of the birth of the hero and these psychological processes. For example, Rank explains that casting the hero out onto the water in a basket is comparable to the physical birth and subsequent separation from the mother, the water being analogous to the amniotic fluid and the river to that of the birth canal. In this way, Rank finds specific, if in some ways limiting, points of connection between the myth of the hero and what he calls childhood trauma.

Making the connection between the hero's birth and childhood trauma certainly works for some heroes of myth, but not all. The casting of the hero onto the water in a reed basket is, for example, not relevant for Taran and his counterparts. It is, however, a detail which often appears in folktales, such as the Grimms' story of "The Devil and the Three Golden Hairs," where the king in the story is aware of a peasant boy's destiny to supplant him. He convinces the boy's parents that he will take care of the infant, after which he places the baby in a basket and sets him to drift upon the river. Interestingly enough, this is how Dallben is discovered in Alexander's story "The Foundling," where the three hags of the marshes of Morva come upon the infant Dallben in a reed basket in the marshes and take him to their hut to raise. Arthur's birth comes closest to this detail of abandonment, but instead of being left, Arthur is carried off by Merlin after his birth and brought to Sir Ektor to foster. Other aspects of Rank's theory of the family romance work for the Arthurians, particularly those related to the hero's relationship with the father. The separation from the mother must be read symbolically in relation to the Arthurians. Bilbo, Frodo, Ged, and Morgan are all separated from what is familiar and initiated into the unfamiliar, a movement most easily characterized by the separation from home: a hobbit hole for Bilbo and Frodo and an island for Ged and Morgan. Arren is the only one who actually has two living parents. Like Ged and Morgan, who separate from Gont and Hed, Arren leaves his home island of Enlad, and is initiated into a wider world by Ged. For each of the others, one or both parents are dead, and fathers dominate the hero's landscape. Taran, in particular, has to come to terms with his father, or the man who claims to be his father, in *Taran Wanderer*.

iv. The Deconstruction of the Heroic

A departure from these traditional approaches to the hero is Margery Hourihan's *Deconstructing the Hero: Literary Theory and Children's Literature*. Hourihan examines the hero's journey in a broad range of texts and suggests that instead of representing a universal archetype, the myth of the hero reinforces the social and political ideologies of western, patriarchal culture:

> The quest story is implicit in the nature of the hero. The sequence of events is the consequence of his will, his ambition, his activism, his rationality and his view of the world. He strives towards his goal never doubting the rightness or the primacy of his cause. He regards any opposition as evil, or at least as 'Wild' and inferior, and he struggles to subdue it. His mode is domination - of the environment, of his enemies, of his friends, of women, and of his own emotions, his own 'weaknesses.' To many readers his certainty is enormously attractive because it reinforces established views of the way the world is. He embodies the privileged terms of the interconnected dualisms which have shaped Western thought and values. The hero is white, and his story inscribes the dominance of white power and white culture. In those versions of the myth which belong to the last four hundred years or so, the period of European expansion and Colonialism, white superiority is frequently an explicit theme. (57-58)

Hourihan's purpose is less to undercut the interpretations of the traditional hero than it is to re-examine traditional hero stories in the light of theoretical, political, and social change. The hero story, according to Hourihan, is integral to western culture, and characters as various as Homer's Odysseus, Defoe's Robinson Crusoe, and Sendak's Max help to reinforce the dominance of reason and the subjection of women and the environment that are central to a patriarchal ideology. In this way, Hourihan sees the hero's journey not as a time of testing, but as a process of domination and subjection.

Nonetheless, Hourihan's cultural approach to the myth of the hero has implications for both the traditional and non-traditional hero. In examining the nature of the quest, Hourihan suggests that it is the very nature of the quest itself that forms the central dualism of patriarchal ideology: reason and civilization set against the threat of the wilderness. She points to Joseph Campbell's monomyth as the model that best exemplifies this dualism, wherein the hero must journey into the unknown and conquer supernatural forces in order to achieve his apotheosis:

> Precisely which secondary meanings a particular reader will construct from the civilization/wilderness opposition depends upon his or her own psychological and social experiences and experience of other texts, but the primary meaning – the valuing of home as the site of order and reason and the perception of what is 'out there' as wild and threatening – is imposed by the very shape of the story. (21-22)

The difficulty with this dualism, according to Hourihan, is that it manifests itself as the struggle between good and evil and reinforces the dominance and primacy of the white, western male over women, the environment, and other cultural groups.

Hourihan's reading of the myth of the hero impacts the Arthurians through the connection most of these characters have to the traditional myth of the hero, as well as those dualisms she sees as fundamental to the myth. She says, for example, that Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* is founded on the conventional dualism of good against evil that places the male, the rational, and the aesthetically pleasing against the female, the animalistic, the irrational, and the ugly. Moreover, the book is rooted in the class system and stands as "a long testament to the natural superiority of the European, and especially the British, patriarchy" (Hourihan 35). A further example of this conventionality is in Susan Cooper's *The Dark is Rising* sequence. As one of the Old Ones, Will Stanton is pitted against the "dark rider," a figure who embodies evil and "to whom infinite but non-specific and seemingly unmotivated malice is attributed" (36). Just as Hourihan refers to Sauron in *Lord of the Rings* as a "symbol without substance," the dark rider becomes a symbol of evil only insofar as he stands in opposition to the light:

> The major problem with this is the determined insularity of its perspective and its equation of 'the Light' with settled English life. A modern instance of English virtue is provided by the description of the happy life of the middle-class Stanton family and their comfortable Christmas rituals. Thus, as with *The Lord of the Rings*, 'good' comes to be defined as that which is manifested by the British establishment, and 'evil' as anything which opposes it. (36)

The only one of the Arthurians whom Hourihan sees as undermining these western, patriarchal dualisms is Ged from *A Wizard of Earthsea*. Le Guin's hero is dark-skinned, which immediately inverts the traditional association between darkness and evil. The Kargish raiders who attack Ged's boyhood village are white and fair-haired and recall the Anglo-Saxon raiders of fifth century Britain. Ged's quest for the shadow/beast that attacked him the night on Roke Knoll becomes less a quest to conquer the creature from unlife than it is a quest for psychic wholeness:

> It is rarely that a hero story constructed according to the traditional pattern of the journey into the wilderness and the final return manages to achieve more than the pleasure of repeated arousal and satisfaction of expectation. Ursula K. Le Guin 's *A Wizard of Earthsea* does so because its successive incidents do not result in unequivocal victories for the hero, and because, as the story progresses, it undermines the very concept of 'Victory' by subverting the dualisms which underlie conventional hero tales. (46)

Hourihan makes no mention whatsoever of Alexander and the *Prydain* chronicles. This omission says less about the value of the chronicles as a contribution to American fantasy literature than it does about Hourihan's failure to take note of an unusual development of the hero tale from an American perspective.

Just as Tolkien and Cooper rely on the conventions of the hero story, Alexander is subject to the conventional dualisms that Hourihan associates with patriarchal structures. As a figure of evil, Arawn at first seems to be the same "symbol without substance" as

Sauron in *The Lord of the Rings* or the dark rider in *The Dark is Rising*, but Alexander manages to humanize his arch villain to some degree by having him usurp the power of the enchantress Achren in order to gain domination over Prydain. Arawn's betrayal of Achren is not made clear until the third book; nonetheless, it places Arawn's evil and lust for power in the context of betrayal and seduction and more broadly in the realm of the sexual. The other important point to note about Taran and the chronicles is that Taran's Americanness, so much at variance with the tradition of high fantasy from a British perspective, breaks the chronicles out of the ideological dualisms that Hourihan identifies in relation to Tolkien and Cooper. Taran's journey toward kingship is much like Ged's toward psychic wholeness, wherein Taran's struggle with his identity is foregrounded to such a degree that his ascension to kingship in the fifth book of the series is almost anti-climactic. Taran's determination to remain in Prydain and his desire to heal the hurts of Arawn's domination become a physical manifestation of that movement toward healing and wholeness.

Hourihan's approach to the hero forms a bridge between the traditional and the non-traditional hero. Her approach certainly identifies the dualistic, ideological nature of the hero in a variety of texts from *The Odyssey* to *Treasure Island*, but her comments on the non-traditional hero identify, at least to some degree, the means by which the non-traditional hero moves toward integration rather than domination and oppression.

v. The Mythopoetic Hero

The movement toward wholeness that characterizes the non-traditional hero also applies to the mythopoetic hero, according to Robert Bly and Robert Moore and Douglas Gillette. Just as it is necessary in Arthurian development, the sword lies at the center of what these writers see as the movement toward masculine integration. Aragorn, Arren, Bran, and Morgan either have or must acquire a sword as part of their development. The key element in the development of Arthur and his recognition as king is the sword, and this is the same element that Lois Kuznets identifies as central to the Arthurian development novel. The sword is the weapon of the warrior, but it is also a means of identifying the traditional hero. Arthur's claim to Excalibur is his claim to kingship. In terms of the Arthurians themselves, the sword is the critical element that binds these characters together as a group, and in mythopoetic terms the sword is the weapon of the warrior, emblematic of strength and masculine resolve.

For Bly and Moore and Gillette, the hero is equivalent to the warrior, and much of what these writers have to say takes the focus off the patriarchal dualisms of western culture and uses this figure to make the distinction between the immaturity of boyhood and maturity of manhood. Bly's comments on male development in such a context are often read as being limited in terms of their applicability to gender, social interaction, and men's lived experience, but his comments are still useful for addressing the warrior, the king, and the nature of male violence in the context of myth in its applicability to Alexander's brand of fantasy. Moore and Gillette make similar use of such archetypal figures, albeit in the context of popular psychology; nonetheless, their description of the progression from the immature to the mature masculine and the development of the hero into the king have a similar bearing on Taran's development over the course of the series.

Bly's comments on the festival of the apples in "Iron John" help to delineate three stages of development from the immature to the mature masculine. The festival follows the road of ashes and the encounter with the feminine, but his characterization of the figure of the warrior at this point in the story is particularly relevant in a discussion of *The Black Cauldron*. Bly distinguishes between the metaphorical warrior and the warrior of action. The metaphorical warrior, whom he refers to as the inner warrior, embodies masculine resolve. The warrior of action as represented by characters such as Taran, Ellidyr, Adaon, and even Gwydion is the warrior who must fit within a command structure and who is responsible to a higher authority.

Even Bly's metaphorical warrior must adhere to such a structure. Thus, the warrior of action serves the king, just as the inner warrior serves the inner king:

> When a warrior is in service, however, to a True King - that is, to a transcendent cause - he does well, and his body becomes a hardworking servant, which he requires to endure cold, heat, pain, wounds, scarring, hunger, lack of sleep, hardship of all kinds. The body usually responds well. The person in touch with warrior energy can work long hours, ignore fatigue, and do what is necessary, … . (150)

Conversely, the soldier of fortune, who stands in opposition to the warrior, serves none but himself. He is concerned only with satisfying his lust for violence and blood. In this way the soldier of fortune is an immature manifestation or shadow form of the warrior, suggesting the negative power of the masculine that informs the dualism so characteristic of Hourihan's patriarchal hero.

The festival of the apples in "Iron John" occurs near the end of the story, after the young man has met the woman with golden hair and joined the battle to fight for the king against the enemy. To discover the identity of the strange knight who fought and won on the battlefield, the king announces a festival, and the princess is to throw an apple to the group of knights in hopes that the strange knight will catch the apple. Three times the young man appears at the festival, and three times he catches the golden apple. The golden apple recalls the golden ball at the beginning of the story, but what is most interesting is that he appears at the festival each time wearing different coloured armour: red, white, and black. Bly suggests that these colours are emblematic of a masculine process of development, different from that of the feminine process of white, red, and black, the progression from maid, to mother, to crone, what Bly calls the "great mother sequence" (201) and evidenced by such Grimms' folktales as "The Raven" and "Snow White." For the man, Bly distinguishes between these stages as the red of passion, the white of resolve, and the black of compassion. The red warrior, lacking maturity and full of rage, represents the adolescent stage of male development. The white is a more mature form of the masculine, but it tends to be blinded by a greater cause, unlike the black tempered by compassion. Bly makes it clear that even though each of these stages represents a different phase of masculine development, it is still possible for a man to experience two stages simultaneously or even to be moving back and forth between stages. Bly's red and white warriors are both immature forms of the masculine hero; only the black warrior has the maturity to temper action with compassion.

Unlike the recognizable tests that Campbell's hero must endure, Bly's young man must walk a road often solitary, tasting the bitterness of grief that comes from the wound he received in setting the Wild Man free. This is less a test of strength and courage than a test of character. Dragons can be slain and victories won, but Bly suggests that growth hinges on fully experiencing grief and woundedness before achieving such victories. Bly's comments regarding the warrior undoubtedly fall into a specific context – that of myth and archetype. The real danger, for what Michael Kimmel calls the weekend warrior, is the literalization of these metaphorical figures. Bly's conception of the warrior emerges out of myth and folktale, and his red, white, and black warriors work well as touchstones for such fantasy characters as Taran, Gwydion, and Morgant because of the relationship between fantasy and other forms such as the romance and the folktale.

Just as Bly discusses a movement from the immature to the mature masculine, Moore and Gillette examine four major archetypes of boys' psychology that represent the immature stages of the later archetypes of king, warrior, magician, and lover, and how each archetype has its bipolar, shadow form. First in this quartet is the divine child, the immature form of the king. This character finds his opposite in the highchair tyrant and the weakling prince, the highchair tyrant representing the aggressive aspect of the bipolar shadow and the weakling prince that of the passive. The divine child, according to Moore and Gillette, possesses the radiant energy of the child, which they suggest is analogous to the Christ child in the story of the nativity. The divine child is both vulnerable and innocent and is located at the center of the universe. In opposition to the divine child is the highchair tyrant, also at the center of the universe, but characterized by limitless need, and whose demanding and tyrannical nature causes him to reject food and love necessary for his own survival. Forming the opposite pole to the highchair tyrant is the weakling prince. This passive variation of the highchair tyrant is no less needy or demanding, but manifests that demanding nature in a lack of enthusiasm and initiative.

The precocious child, the immature magician, is the archetype characterized by curiosity and adventure and has its shadow in the know-it-all trickster and the naive dummy. The trickster is both intimidating and verbally abusive, while the dummy is, like the weakling prince, passive, lacking vigour and creativity, in effect masking the same grandiose attitude that characterizes the trickster.

The immature lover is the Oedipal child, both relational and connected to the nurturing mother. In its shadow form, this archetype becomes the mama's boy and the dreamer, the mama's boy forever seeking after the mother and forever rejecting her, and the dreamer lacking the ability to be relational and only having a connection to intangibles and his own imagination.

The most significant of these archetypes with respect to Taran is the hero. He is the most advanced form of boys' psychology, the archetype that pushes the limits of possibility. The grand-stander bully and the coward form the shadow poles of the hero, both of whom tend to be loners. The bully is that aspect of the hero who feels invulnerable, denying death, while the coward is the passive form of the bully.

These four archetypes of boys' psychology help to delineate the nature of what Moore and Gillette call the immature masculine and have a bearing on Taran's development in *The Black Cauldron*. Moreover, with Bly's warriors, it is possible to examine Taran's development as a warrior with respect to these stages as he enters the world of men.

vi. Social Interaction and the World of Men

Robert Connell takes a similar stance to that of Michael Kimmel on the mythopoetic men's movement. In *The Men and the Boys*, Connell acknowledges the usefulness of the movement in addressing gender stereotypes, but he argues that the movement as a whole is ultimately limiting as a means of addressing men's lived experience:

> I think the key point they have realized is the importance of men's emotional lives - which strikes many … as a revelation, precisely because conventional middle-class western masculinity tends to suppress emotion and deny vulnerability. To emphasize that men do have emotional troubles, that masculine stereotypes can be damaging, that men suffer from isolation, and that men too can hold hands and cry - this is not a bad thing. Writers like Keen, especially, have eloquent things to say about the distortions of men's emotional lives, and how they are connected with violence, alienation, and environmental destruction. But in pop psychology these understandings come at a considerable price. With the aid of the later and crazier works of Carl Jung, this school of thought has constructed a fantasy of the universal 'deep masculine', which is as stereotyped as anything in Hollywood. (5)

Recognizing such limitations helps to maintain a perspective on how Alexander is constructing men's experience throughout his series. The mythopoetic writers base their discussion of masculinity on myth, on archetype, and on folktale, as well as on initiatory practices among so-called traditional cultures. Because Alexander's brand of fantasy emerges out of romance and folktale, it is possible to apply a mythopoetic approach to Taran's development over the course of the series; nevertheless, it is equally possible to apply Connell's social structure of masculinity to Taran's developing sense of manhood as a way of broadening a discussion of masculinity and Alexander's place as a twentieth-century writer of American fantasy.

Campbell and the other writers on the traditional hero focus on the development of a single hero, one man, mythical or historical, who ascends to kingship by various means, but Alexander's series shows the interplay between men that characterizes the nature of masculine development within a fantasy landscape. This interplay between men, or the social interaction of multiple masculinities, is precisely what both Robert Connell and Michael Kimmel see as the determining factor in how manhood is defined. The male hegemony, according to Connell, becomes the place from which other masculinities, in particular gay masculinity, are either subordinated or marginalised. Connell states that the hegemony is that form of masculinity most "honoured or desired" by a given group or culture and that most "men live in a state of some tension with, or distance from, the hegemonic masculinity of their culture or community" (11). Bearing these distinctions in mind, we can apply this model to Alexander's series. Gwydion and the Sons of Don represent the centre of male power throughout the chronicles, while characters such as Taran, the brawling cantrev lords, and the Commot folk are complicit with that authority. Taran, because of his orphan status, is marginalised by Prydain's aristocracy, and he finds himself feeling more at home among the farmers and craftsmen of Prydain than he does among the nobility. Taran, however, does not remain marginalised throughout the series. His experience over the course of his adventures and his interaction with all the peoples of Prydain eventually give him the authority to become Gwydion's chief war leader by the final book.

Among Alexander and his counterparts, Tolkien and Alexander are the only ones to depict the interactions among men to any great degree, but the men in *The Lord of the*

Rings are less defined in terms of a developing masculinity than in the *Prydain* series. Some critics, Hourihan among them, see Tolkien creating a world of boys in which women have only a small part, and where the standard for masculinity is set by such characters as Aragorn, Boromir, and Eomer, all of whom focus exclusively on the struggle for power in Middle-earth. Manhood, according to these standards, becomes defined by power, war, and conquest. Like the Sons of Don in Prydain, the men of Gondor represent the centre of hegemonic control in Middle-earth. Alexander, however, in spite of a cosmology similar to Tolkien's, devotes more of his text to the interplay between men. Sitting as part of Gwydion's council and receiving his first sword both place Taran within the world of men, but his actions during the quest to destroy the black cauldron determine how he stands in relation to the hegemony in Prydain. This quest marks the beginning of Taran's road of trials, and the pain, disappointment, shame, and betrayal that he experiences over the course of the adventure provide his introduction to the power structures that dominate the Prydain landscape.

For Taran, the adventure in *The Book of Three* marks the beginning of his road of trials. By the end of the first book, he is aware of his own failings, but *The Black Cauldron* introduces him into an arena where the tests come at a higher price. His initial concern is with finding his own place within Gwydion's war band. Two characters who help Taran are the hot-headed Ellidyr, Prince of Pen-Llarcan, and Adaon, the meditative son of the chief bard, Taliesin. Each forms an extreme to Taran's character. Ellidyr, nobly born but bitter, continually shames Taran and takes offence at any perceived slight to his honour. Adaon, on the other hand, is a healer and a harper first, and a warrior second. Taran looks up to Adaon and respects his judgement and authority. Adaon is less the warrior than Gwydion, whose authority in Prydain is second only to Math, the High King; but like Gwydion's, Adaon's nature is tempered by compassion.

Taran's interaction with these two characters helps to demonstrate his conception of manhood as it comes down from the aristocratic hegemony within Prydain. Ellidyr, in particular, derides Taran for his position as Pig-Keeper at Caer Dallben, while he derives a sense of authority and entitlement from his pedigree. The basis of the relationship between Taran and Ellidyr is fear, competition and control: fear of appearing less of a warrior in the eyes of the other and vying for a place within Gwydion's war band. According to Michael Kimmel, just such a sense of fear and competition forms the basis of male interaction in the public sphere. In "Masculinity as Homophobia: Fear, Shame, and Silence in the Construction of Gender Identity," Kimmel explains this fear as the fear of other men, a fundamental sense of homophobia that dictates the ways in which men interact:

> This, then, is the great secret of American manhood: *We are afraid of other men.* Homophobia is a central organizing principle of our cultural definition of manhood. ... Homophobia is the fear that other men will unmask us, emasculate us, reveal to us and the world that we do not measure up, that we are not real men. We are afraid to let other men see that fear. Fear makes us ashamed, because the recognition of fear in ourselves is proof to ourselves that we are not as manly as we pretend.... Our fear is the fear of humiliation. We are ashamed to be afraid. (278)

Even though such a homophobic response is not overt in Alexander, the competition between Taran and Ellidyr suggests how both characters are afraid of not "measuring up" as warriors. Ellidyr uses his pedigree as a means of justifying his place within the hegemonic order of Prydain, which is clear from his response at the council when Gwydion assigns him to guard the pack animals with Taran during the assault on Dark Gate: "'Why must I be held back? Am I no better than a pig-boy? He is untried, a green apple!'" (*Black* 22). This comment has the effect of marginalizing Taran at the beginning of the book, and he spends the remainder of the adventure attempting to assert his authority in relation to his companions. For Kimmel, this public arena – men interacting with men – constitutes the place of testing, where masculinity is formed and re-formed according to those interactions.

As the quest progresses, Taran learns about manhood through his interactions with both Adaon and Ellidyr. Riding to Dark Gate, Taran speaks to Adaon about honour, and the soon-to-be bard tells Taran, "'I have marched in many a battle host, … but I have also planted seeds and reaped the harvest with my own hands. And I have learned that there is greater honour in a field well plowed than a field steeped in blood'" (*Black* 31).

Taran takes these words to heart, but his response to Adaon stands in contrast to his response to Ellidyr, the soldier-like son of Pen-Llarcan, who places his honour ahead of any other concerns. The dichotomy between these two characters suggests Taran's polarized attitude. Like Ellidyr, Taran is concerned with his own honour, but he also longs for the kind of wisdom and quiet thoughtfulness that Adaon embodies, and which he first experiences in the valley of Medwyn in the first book of the series. Because these two characters are much closer to Taran in terms of age and experience, they help to serve as a reflection of Taran's struggle to position himself in relation to the hegemony. His understanding of being a man at this point is synonymous with being a warrior. Ellidyr is consumed by rage and the need for action, whereas Adaon is a healer who brings both a thoughtfulness and maturity to the task of gaining the cauldron. Not until the death of Adaon is Taran confronted with the necessity of acting in a manner that is outside the hegemony.

What Taran does not understand is how easily the centre of power in Prydain can shift from one form of domination to another. Just as Taran finds a dark twin in Ellidyr, Gwydion finds a counterpoint in Morgant. This character, cold as ice, recognizes Gwydion as his overlord, but at the same time Morgant brutally takes the cauldron from Eleddyr in the hope of raising an army of cauldron-born to seize power in Prydain. Morgant's ambition to supplant the Death-Lord suggests the nature of hegemonic masculinity, whereby one dominant cultural group can be replaced by another.

In this way, it is the nature of hegemonic control to remain unfixed. Connell traces this changing nature of hegemonic masculinity in his essay "The Big Picture: Masculinities in Recent World History." He identifies the shifting nature of hegemonic domination according to political and economic change. He discusses the pre-eminence of a hegemony in ancient China, nineteenth-century Britain, and twentieth-century America, where the nature of the hegemony altered with social and historical change as a means of maintaining cultural domination: "When the historical conditions for a strategy's success have altered, the hegemonic form of masculinity is vulnerable to displacement by other forms" (604). In this way the hegemonic form adapts to cultural change, invariably re-asserting itself as the centre of political and economic power.

Transferring the malleable nature of the hegemonic project to fantasy literature has the effect of removing the focus from a struggle between good and evil to a question of domination and control. Morgant is a character who seeks such domination. Similar to Gwydion's recognition of Taran's potential in the first of the chronicles, Morgant recognizes the qualities of a warrior in Taran, and at the end of *The Black Cauldron* offers Taran the position of war leader in his army of cauldron-born. Gwydion differs from Morgant because he recognizes his place within Prydain's hegemony, whereas Morgant seeks to rival the Death-Lord and destroy the Sons of Don. Gwydion has a clear sense of a warrior's duty to his king, but Morgant desires to displace the centre of power in Prydain and seize control himself. Thus, though these characters derive their authority from the existing hegemony, the difference between Gwydion and Morgant as war leaders is that Gwydion has the ability to see beyond himself, while Morgant is afflicted with that peculiar form of tunnel vision to which most villains are subject.

vii. Violence and the Male Wound

The death of Adaon and the gaining of the black cauldron provide the focus for the last half of *The Black Cauldron.* Taran once again finds himself the leader of the companions, and with the death of Adaon, Taran discovers the nature of grief and violence. This violence is part of a discussion of the darker aspects of the warrior. The companions learn that Orwen, Orddu, and Orgoch have the cauldron, and Adaon gives Taran the authority to decide whether or not to retrieve it. Taran's decision to journey to the Marshes of Morva to seek the cauldron is based on a concern for his own honour. He is still consumed by the self-aggrandizement characteristic of the immature masculine according to Moore and Gillette. The journey to the marshes results in the death of Adaon, and Taran experiences grief both in Adaon's death and in giving up Adaon's brooch as a price for the cauldron. His grief is as much about his own doubt as it is about the loss of Adaon, and the conviction of his own failure and the grief he feels once the companions have won the cauldron recall Bly's description of the emotional wounding of boys, while his grief and shame over his position as Assistant Pig-Keeper lead Taran to the source of his wound in the fourth book of the series.

The death of Adaon in *The Black Cauldron* also marks a change in the representation of violence that carries over into the last three books. *The Book of Three* is formative in terms of both the series as a whole and Taran's character, and even though there are a number of violent scenes, the violence differs in the second, fourth, and fifth books.

In *The Book of Three,* violence has a folktale quality, the exception being the burning of the men in the baskets during the ritual involving the Horned King. The Horned King himself represents a demonic parody of the horned god, but the violence associated with this character has a particular symbolic resonance that removes it to an archetypal rather than a realistic level. The Cauldron-Born appear much in the same way. They are dehumanized warriors, made more terrible because of their distorted humanity: they are creatures of the land of death, spell-enslaved, and forced to do the bidding of Arawn through enchantment. They are not the symbol without substance that Hourihan identifies in Tolkien and Cooper; they are a parody of manhood and masculine resolve embodied by Bly's warrior.

The huntsmen of Annuvin that appear in *The Black Cauldron* are more human than enchanted, and thus form a darker counterpoint to the other warriors in the text. Regardless of their beast-like natures, they are still human, whereas the Cauldron-Born are human only in appearance. Each band of huntsmen functions as a fighting unit, and the blood oath that binds them together enables the group to increase in ferocity if one of their numbers is killed. Each member of the unit is also branded on the forehead, which serves as both a visible mark of their oath and a mockery of the oaths of the companions, while this darker use of ritual practice stands as a counterpoint to Taran's initiation into the world of men.

It stands to reason that Alexander would shy away from explicit descriptions of violence in an all-ages fantasy; however, his attempt to fully represent masculine experience and male violence requires a darker tone. When the companions are attacked by the huntsmen on their way to the Marshes of Morva, Adaon is killed when he interposes himself between Taran and one of the huntsmen. Although this scene is more graphic in its depiction of male violence, it is problematic in terms of its execution. Diana Waggoner, in her assessment of the Prydain books, claims that the series is often inconsistent in terms of its treatment of time and space, and although she does not refer to this particular scene, her criticism could be applied here. Taran breaks away from grappling with one of the huntsmen. The huntsman crouches on the ground, poised to throw a knife. Physically, there seems little space between Taran and the attacking huntsman, but Adaon manages to interpose himself and his horse between Taran and the huntsman. Taran then sees the knife glittering as it flies through the air, an odd thing considering that the huntsman must be almost at Adaon's stirrup, while Taran is on the opposite side of the horse. The next thing Taran sees is Adaon slumping forward with the knife in his chest. If poorly mapped, the scene still suggests a kind of violence not encountered in the series thus far. Moreover, it suggests a realistic mode of violence unlike the kind of fairy tale violence seen in the first book. Alexander progressively follows a more realistic mode throughout the Prydain series, a mode that is not dependent on what Tolkien calls Faerie or a Faerie landscape.

Violence of a similar kind emerges more and more in Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* as the war of the ring proceeds. A hobbit's view of violence comes from Sam, after he and Frodo are captured by Faramir and his company in the woods of Ithilien. Sam scrambles part way up a bay tree to watch the fight between the red-cloaked Southrons and the green clad men of Gondor on the road. One of the Southrons falls down over the bank with a green-feathered arrow in his neck: "It was Sam's first view of a battle of men against men, and he did not like it much. He was glad he could not see the dead face. He wondered what the man's name was and where he came from; and if he was really evil of heart, or what lies or threats led him on the long march from his home; and if he would not really rather have stayed there in peace …" (*Lord* 687). Fighting against cauldron-born warriors, giant spiders, orcs, or trolls is entirely within the bounds of faerie, but men against men is realistic enough to come close to breaking the spell of secondary belief. More importantly, Sam's sense of pathos as he looks down at the dead warrior speaks to the anonymity and brutality of war. Something similar happens during the battle of the Pelennor fields before the gates of Minas Tirith. As the enemy approaches the city walls, all the heads of those who fell defending the wall of the Pelennor are cast into the burning city. This gruesome detail puts an edge on the violence of the battle, but more poignant yet is the poem, composed long after by a minstrel of Rohan, which we have by a bit of narrative sleight of hand. The Mounds of Mundberg tells of all the men who fell during the battle, and the poem carries with it the sorrow and poignancy of Tolkien's wartime experiences.

Alexander also had a first-hand experience of war, but not the trench warfare that Tolkien experienced in World War I. As Kenneth Zahorski and Robert Boyer point out in their critical/biographical essay on Alexander, his war experiences had an effect on his writing but not the one Alexander was expecting: "The army did provide Alexander with a variety of experiences that affected his later writings, but not in the ways he expected. His was a romantic conception of war ...and he hoped, apparently, to perform heroically, see the world, and write about both experiences. Instead he acquired that measure of cynicism and realism that now characterize his writings" (7). Along with this edge of cynicism and realism, Alexander's wartime experiences gave him the landscape for his *Prydain* cycle. He trained in Wales with army intelligence and was struck by the beauty of the Welsh landscape, which he eventually made the basis for his *Prydain* books.

As for his fantasy, Alexander's realistic presentation of violence is sometimes at odds with Taran as a character in an all-ages fantasy and the lessons he is learning. Nonetheless, such a classification needs some qualification because of the mix of what Waggoner calls Alexander's didacticism and realistic violence. Her objection is to the presence of nuggets of learning and trite philosophizing in a high fantasy, a technique, she claims, is much better suited to Alexander's shorter tales. Taran's lessons and the degree to which they are verbalized suggest a particular audience, one perhaps too young to implicitly understand what Taran is undergoing. The violence, however, demands a more sophisticated reader than is otherwise implied.

Waggoner is correct about one thing: Alexander is less than consistent with his portrayal of violence throughout the series. This is the fault of the series as a whole because Alexander does not have the same difficulty in the realistic presentation of violence in the *Westmark* books. The *Westmark* books are fantasy, insofar as Westmark is an imaginary kingdom, but there is no magic, and the monarchy is eventually tossed out of the kingdom. The violence throughout these books is consistently realistic and disturbing, as in the blood bath that ensues as the rebels fight against the usurping king in the second and third books of the series. The *Westmark* books are more consistent, but they are not all-ages books. They demand an older audience, simply by virtue of the depiction of violence.

It is perhaps a limitation of the genre, but violence in fantasy is almost always ascribed to male characters. The main occupation of the warrior is violence, and prowess in battle is the chief means of measuring the worth of a warrior. Margery Hourihan sees violence as the traditional hero's means of domination throughout his quest, while Bly and Moore and Gillette see violence as an aspect of the dark or shadow form of the warrior archetype. Such a view of male violence is born out by both Morgant and the huntsmen in *The Black Cauldron*, the possible exception being that of Adaon, the harper and healer. Nevertheless, the Sons of Don must resort to violence to maintain their rule of Prydain in the face of the threat of the Death-Lord; even Fflewddur Fflam, the would be bard, is chosen to take part in the adventure because of his sword rather than his harp.

What does such a depiction of violence in a fantasy landscape say about male violence, domination, and control? Robert Connell sees violence as not necessarily inherently male but something that is subject to social conditions rather than biology. In *The Men and the Boys*, Connell admits a connection between gender and violence, citing examples that yoke men to violence in the military, business, sports, and the home. Men, he claims, are more likely than women to own a handgun in private life, to force sex from an unconsenting partner, or to commit acts of physical assault (213-14). Nonetheless, he claims that such facts have more to do with culture than hormones:

> There is a widespread belief that it is natural for men to be violent. Males are inherently more aggressive than women, the argument goes. "Boys will be boys" and cannot be trained otherwise; rape and combat - however regrettable - are part of the unchanging order of nature. There is often an appeal to biology, with testosterone in particular, the so-called "male hormone', as a catch-all explanation for men's aggression. Careful examination of the evidence shows that this biological essentialism is not credible. Testosterone levels for instance, far from being a clear-cut *source* of dominance and aggression in society, are as likely to

> be the *consequence* of social relations ... . Cross-cultural studies of masculinities ... reveal a diversity that is impossible to reconcile with a biologically fixed master pattern of masculinity. (215)

Such a view of violence has the effect of undercutting the mythopoetic representation of the warrior. Connell explains that gendered violence is not simply about individuals; it is about "masculinized institutions" and the way in which organized sports or the military are constructed according to particular versions of masculinity. Thus, the resulting hegemony is one in which violence is authorized and even celebrated: "So it is in social masculinities rather than biological differences that we must seek the main causes of gendered violence, and the main answers to it" (216).

How then can we apply Connell's idea of social masculinities and masculinized institutions to Alexander and his counterparts? The warrior class in both Alexander and Tolkien is primarily masculine, while the school on Roke in Le Guin's *Earthsea* books excludes women entirely. It is true that wizardry in Le Guin is not characterized by violence, but it is about power, male power and male control. The warriors in both Prydain and Middle-earth draw their authority from pedigree, and the institution of the warrior (if we can call it an institution) is sustained by violence. The wizards of Earthsea, for the most part, draw their authority from the school on Roke, a long established and recognized power in the Archipelago. Apprentice wizards learn the craft of magic from the nine masters at the school, but violence is sometimes a result of exercising that power. One of the most clear-cut examples of male violence within a hegemony comes from The Queen of Air and Darkness, the second book in T. H. White's *Once and Future King*. When the young Arthur comes to power, he must fight against eleven rebel kings who see war as a sport, what Merlin, living backwards through time, compares to the nineteenth-century sport of fox hunting. The feudal lords of Britain fight encased in steel and have no regard for the hundreds of Saxon foot soldiers killed in the process. Arthur's idea of the round table amounts to replacing this feudal hegemony with a system that fights on the side of right, which itself becomes a masculinized institution based on force over the course of the book. Given Connell's structure of a hegemony, as well as his thoughts on gendered violence and masculinized institutions, fantasy as a genre does little more than authorize domination and violence in the context of the fantastic. This can hardly represent the whole story. Even though it is possible to recognize such structures in Prydain, in Middle-earth, or in Earthsea, there are those who stand apart and who are not complicit in the hegemonic project. In the words of Faramir, son of the Lord Denethor of Gondor: "War must be, while we defend our lives against a destroyer who would devour all; but I do not love the bright sword for its sharpness, nor the arrow for its swiftness, nor the warrior for his glory. I love that which they defend: the city of the Men of Numenor; and I would have her loved for her memory, her ancestry, her beauty, and present wisdom" (Two Towers 656).

viii. The Non-Traditional Hero

The events in *The Black Cauldron* move Taran toward a new vision of the heroic. His experience of leading the companions after the death of Adaon are characteristic of a different kind of hero, and his decision to win the cauldron at any cost forces him to forego his dream of being part of the existing hegemony. Moreover, the death of Adaon introduces Taran to grief in a number of ways. Receiving the brooch from Adaon enables Taran to see the world clearly and to know his companions in a new way. He dreams of Ellidyr and the black beast that clings to Ellidyr's back. He dreams of leading the companions through a wide grassland, and when a sea bird flies overhead, a path opens before him. He dreams of Fflewddur's harp playing by itself on a rock in a stream and of being attacked by wolves and a bear in the Marshes of Morva. Taran quickly learns that he must interpret his dreams as a means of helping the companions. His dream of Ellidyr gives him compassion for the man with whom he had only felt an adolescent rivalry, and the brooch gives him a new awareness of the natural world: "Taran was aware, strangely, of vast activities along the forest trail. ... He could see them [the squirrels and the ants] clearly, not so much with his eye, but in a way he had never known before" (Black 105). The enchantment of the brooch hints at Taran's already established affinity for the natural world and suggests qualities of connectedness often more ppronounced in the non-traditional hero.

To gain the black crochan, Taran and his companions must give up Adaon's brooch to the three hags in the Marshes of Morva. The brooch gives Taran a part of what he longs for, but he must forego what he gains and hand over the brooch in exchange for the cauldron. This measure of self-sacrifice on Taran's part recalls an aspect of Norma Bagnall's American hero and Bly's white warrior in service to a transcendent cause. Nonetheless, Taran sees his sacrifice only in terms of what it leaves him: "'Yes ...I am still only an Assistant Pig-Keeper. I should have known that anything else was too good to last'" (*Black* 168). Taran's words hint at an immature understanding of the task, but sitting and gazing at the cauldron, Taran also experiences something of the grief that Bly describes in *Iron John*. The sense of woundedness for many men, as Bly says, can come from absent fathers, shame, alcoholism, or disability. Taran experiences something of this grief and shame while he sits and stares at the cauldron. Eilonwy points out to Taran that "'No matter what else happens, you won the cauldron for Gwydion and Dallben and all of us. That's one thing nobody can take away from you. Why, for that alone you have every reason to be proud'" (*Black* 169). But even in thinking of his accomplishments, and "as the wind moaned across the heath, and the Crochan loomed before him like an iron shadow, he thought once again of the brooch, and he buried his face in his hands and wept" (*Black* 170). Taran grieves the loss of Adaon's brooch and for himself as an orphan and Assistant Pig-Keeper, which is all part of Taran's introduction to grief and his struggle to be something other than what he is: Assistant Pig-Keeper of Caer Dallben.

Alexander brings together the various male characters after Ellidyr forcibly takes the cauldron from the companions and shows a different view of heroism than that which appears in more traditional renderings. When Morgant captures the companions, Taran must decide to either agree to become one of Morgant's warriors or see his friends fed one by one to the cauldron. The cauldron has the power to bring dead warriors back to life, but it has the inverse effect on a living man. Taran knows that he can destroy the cauldron only by throwing himself into it willingly. But Taran's heroic convictions are set against those of Morgant, who is self-serving, cold, and ruthless in his desire for power. He offers Taran something that is frighteningly different from Taran's dreams of heroism. He represents a calculating quest for power that is not part of Taran's understanding of a hero. Taran learns much about "the world of men." He learns that the world he so eagerly wants to be a part of is not all honour and glory, but full of deceit and betrayal.

Morgant's plans for power rest on being able to use the cauldron. With its destruction, Morgant is reduced to fighting hand-to-hand with King Smoit, as Gwydion and the rest of his war band enter the glade. Ellidyr's act of throwing himself into the cauldron represents a soldierly self-sacrifice that is excessive, but nonetheless consistent with Ellidyr's character. Taran experiences grief over Ellidyr's death and the suicide of Ellidyr's horse. Heroism for Taran is no longer simply about glory and victory; it is about grief, death, violence, and betrayal. All of these characteristics help to place heroism and the world of men in opposition to what Taran has left behind. Caer Dallben may symbolize Taran's youth, his innocence, and naiveté; it is pastoral, a place of innocence, while at the same time it is as much a part of the struggle for power as the city of the High King and Annuvin itself.

Morgant's death at the end of *The Black Cauldron* looks forward to what Taran will eventually discover in his quest for his parentage in *Taran Wanderer*. Taran asks Gwydion why Morgant is still being honoured considering his betrayal. Gwydion responds that manhood is a mixture, and Morgant's deeds at the end of his life cannot take away from his greatness as a warrior. This exchange helps to set the tone for the rest of the books, as Alexander's series becomes less concerned with faerie and more concerned with the representation of masculinities within a faerie landscape.

Alexander uses this second book in his series to introduce Taran to manhood in the context of the traditional and non-traditional hero, and by depicting masculinity in terms of plurality, interaction, domination, and violence. In the quest for his parents in *Taran Wanderer*, Taran must confront his own despair and shovel the ashes of his own grief like the king's son in "Iron John." *The Black Cauldron* is only the beginning of Taran's road of trials. He is introduced to the world of men in a more formalized way. He experiences violence, cruelty, and betrayal in a way that challenges his preconceptions of honour and manhood. He encounters the shadow side of the warrior in the huntsman and the betrayal of Morgant. He learns about masculine power and violence and the aristocratic hegemony, and about measuring manhood in a public sphere. The grief and woundedness he discovers in finding and winning the cauldron signal his experiences in the books to come, and this understanding of woundedness dominates the third and fourth books. But before Taran encounters his father, he must first deal to some degree with women and desire. The third book in Alexander's series represents such an encounter, preparing Taran for his quest for the father in *Taran Wanderer*.

Chapter 5

The Encounter with the Feminine

The third book in Alexander's Prydain series moves Taran's gender identification in a new direction. *The Black Cauldron* has Taran becoming intimately acquainted with various masculinities, as well as with Prydain's established hegemony, but *The Castle of Llyr* has Taran redefining himself in relation to the princess Eilonwy, with Taran becoming the desiring subject to Eilonwy as the object of that desire. Taran's desire introduces an element of the erotic, which in turn furthers his understanding of gender and moves him toward the search for his parents in the fourth book.

The Castle of Llyr takes the companions to the Isle of Mona, where the princess Eilonwy is to be educated in how to behave as a young lady. The day after the companions arrive, the villainous Magg kidnaps the princess, which forces Taran to confront his newly discovered feelings for Eilonwy that intensify over the course of the ensuing adventure. Each of the three models of initiation places women at various stages in the initiatory process for men; however, the introduction of the erotic into this process is best represented by the archetypal and mythopoetic models. In terms of Alexander's series, *The Castle of Llyr* represents the encounter with the feminine and is the second part of the road of trials for Taran. In *The Black Cauldron*, Taran enters the public arena of men and masculinities where he learns about grief and loss, but in the third of the chronicles, Taran discovers, to his own discomfiture, his romantic attachment to the princess. During the course of his adventure on Mona, Taran encounters women in literal and archetypal ways, including the erotic feminine, the mother, the archetypal mother, and the temptress. These encounters occur in an archetypal and a social context, and I argue that these encounters with the feminine mark a shift in Taran's gender identification to include desire and the recognition of the place of women within the hierarchy of Prydain.

i. The Desiring Subject in Children's Fiction

The Castle of Llyr is the most problematic of the five books in Alexander's series. The departure of Eilonwy from Caer Dallben, her impending marriage to Prince Rhun, and Gwydion's discovery of Achren's plan to control Eilonwy's power as an enchantress all point to *The Castle of Llyr* as a different text from the other four. It involves a quest but is narrower in scope and coloured by the simplified boy meets girl plot of the popular romantic, in spite of being archetypally based in the same way as the other books in the series are. Moreover, it introduces a new element into Taran's experience: he believes himself to be in competition for the affections of Eilonwy, the object of his newly discovered desire. In this way, *The Castle of Llyr* removes Taran in part from the world of flashing swords and galloping horses and offers a more concentrated look at gender and gender relations.

The difficulty in discussing sex or sexual desire in children's books is the taboo nature of the topic within the genre. This is, however, not to say that sexual desire does not appear in works for children. Roderick McGillis, in *The Nimble Reader*, discusses the psychoanalytic approach to children's literature, wherein a Freudian reading of fairy tales, for example, identifies sexuality and sexual desire as repressed elements within a range of texts:

> Freud's ideas concerning child sexuality and the mechanism of repression have proven attractive to commentators on children's literature because of Freud's fundamental moral vision. Bettelheim, for example, defends fairy tales despite their sexual content and their willingness to explore issues relating to incest, sexual desire, transgression against the authority of parents, and violence because his Freudian perspective allows him to view the tales as dream matter. That is, the tales function like dreams to sublimate and hence successfully repress desire and aggression. One reason recent ideological criticism of the tales has taken issue with Bettelheim is precisely his reading of the tales as forces for conservative social values. (85)

A psychoanalytic approach to children's books may encourage such social conservatism, but it does attempt to address the presence of sexuality in texts ostensibly for children.

Fairy tales can be read in terms of the repression of sexual desire, but what happens when we have a text such as *The Castle of Llyr* where gender and desire are foregrounded to a much greater degree? Part of the answer to this question comes from

Kent Baxter's article "Desire and the Literary Machine: Capitalism, Male Sexuality, and Stratemeyer Books for Boys." Baxter discusses at length how sexual desire is displaced from these boys' adventures, much in the same way that McGillis explains the displacement of desire in children's literature generally. The difference is that Baxter explains such displacement in terms of an object of value either coveted or stolen by the villain of the text. Series books such as *The Hardy Boys* or *The Rovers* generally fall into the form of a mystery, and the heroes of the series must work to recover the missing object. No corresponding object exists in *The Castle of Llyr*, but Taran's desire is displaced onto the search for the princess and the mystery of her disappearance. In this way, as Taran searches the island for the missing Eilonwy, his new awareness of desire encompasses the romantic and the erotic, and represents a deepening of his understanding of his feelings for the princess and his place within the social structure of Prydain.

Alexander's representation of women and the feminine is unusual, and it stands out from the same representation in Tolkien and Le Guin. He blends the contemporary with the popular romantic and the archetypal, portraying Eilonwy as a feisty, contemporary young woman, who stands in stark contrast to Achren as the archetypal witch and temptress of folktale. Taran's struggle is to reconcile his gender identification with what he sees in Eilonwy, and then go on to encounter the archetypal feminine on the island of Angharad where the princess is captive. In this way, the book furthers the process of initiation and gender identification for Taran, and prepares him for the quest for his father in the fourth book of the series.

ii. Encountering the Erotic

Before examining Taran's encounter with the feminine in the context of the mythopoetic and archetypal models, I would like to consider Sam Keen's comments on the place of what he calls "Woman" within the man's journey toward maturity. *Fire in the Belly* describes 'Woman' in terms of an inexorable force that has the power to affect every aspect of a man's life as long as it remains unaddressed:

> One of the major tasks of manhood is to explore the unconscious feelings that surround our various images of WOMAN, to dispel false mystification, to dissolve the vague sense of threat and fear, and finally to learn to respect and love

> the strangeness of womankind. ... It is the WOMAN in our heads, more than the women in our beds or boardrooms, who causes most of our problems. And these archetypical creatures - goddesses, bitches, angels, Madonnas, castrators, witches, Gypsy maidens, earth mothers - must be exorcised from our minds and hearts before we can learn to love women. (15-16)

Keen is suggesting that "Woman" is that which the individual man must separate from if he is to survive the passage into manhood. Although his comments are meant as a means for men to address psychological issues around gender, such a separation from women is what Kimmel sees as one of the weakest aspects of the mythopoetic men's movement. In "The New Men's Movement: Retreat and Regression with America's Weekend Warriors," Kimmel states that such a response to women amounts to an "inversion of feminist psychoanalytic insights of the past three decades" (9), which begins with the initial separation of boys from mother:

> We think that the core psychological problem of gender formation for men is, in a sense, not too little separation from mother but too much. In societies where men do little parenting, both young boys and girls have a primary identification with the mother. However, the establishment of a boy's identity and his individuality is a psychic process in which the boy struggles to renounce identification with mother, and the nurturing she represents, and embrace identification with father. It is a process with enormous costs. (9)

If men are to address what Kimmel calls the "mother wound," then the answer is to forego those practices of risk-taking and competition characteristic of male behaviour. The answer lies in social interaction, not separation.

Does social interaction necessarily mean abandoning archetypal constructs of woman, which for many men continue to exist as a psychological reality? Alexander does both: Taran does not only encounter the feminine in archetypal forms; he must engage Eilonwy as an equal and a character in her own right. It is, therefore, necessary to separate such archetypal encounters from those that occur within a social context. Eilonwy is not an archetype. She continually challenges Taran's assertions and assumptions about the place of women within the hierarchy of Prydain. Taran is complicit in his beliefs. He accepts the dictates of the existing hegemony that encourage the subordination of women to the warrior class, while he discovers that his desire for the princess has the effect of marginalizing him within that hierarchy. Taran must give up either his feelings for the princess or his place within the hegemony.

iii. Wakening the Lover and Discovering the Garden

For Bly, the emergence of the lover comes when the boy in the story is done with ashes and goes to work in the garden. While working in the garden, the boy pulls off his head covering and the sun glances off his golden hair. The princess sees the golden hair of the gardener's boy and asks that he bring her some flowers from the garden. The boy brings her wild flowers. Three times the princess presses gold coins upon the boy and tries to pull off his head covering, and three times he runs away, giving the coins to the gardener's children. The princess is the inverse of the queen, who was the keeper of the key at the beginning of the story. Having stolen the key and experienced failure at the sacred spring, the boy, or young man at this point, has entered the garden and is prepared to make his way back to the feminine.

Bly's discussion of the feminine takes two forms: the garden and meeting the woman with golden hair. In the garden, the initiate is concerned with nurturing and with soul work: "The enclosed garden then suggests cultivation as opposed to rawness, boundaries as opposed to unbounded sociability, soul concerns as opposed to outer obsessions, passion as opposed to raw sexuality, growth of soul desire as opposed to obsession with a generalized greed for things" (130). As a place set apart, the garden is parallel to the sacred space, the spring the boy guards in the forest for the Wild Man. Whereas the boy discovers failure in guarding the sacred spring, he learns about growing things and contemplative thoughtfulness in the garden. It is a place removed from the world, just as the sacred spring in the forest, but here the young man is not being tested as he was in guarding the spring. Just as Taran hears the life calling to him in Medwyn's valley, Bly's garden is a time for the initiate to commune with the natural world in a contained way.

Bly's lover who dwells in the garden is similar to the lover archetype according to Moore and Gillette. With the integration of the Oedipal child, the man can mature into the lover, but, like Bly, Moore and Gillette are careful to put the lover in terms not exclusive to sexuality:

> The Lover is the archetype of play and of "display," of healthy embodiment, of being in the world of sensuous pleasure and in one's own body *without shame*. Thus, the Lover is *deeply sensual* - sensually aware and sensitive to the physical world and all its splendour. The Lover is related and connected to them all, drawn into them through his sensitivity. His sensitivity leads him to feel compassionately and empathetically united with them. For the man accessing the Lover, all things are bound to each other in mysterious ways. (Moore and Gillette 121)

Thus, the lover is not the man of sexual conquest, but the one connected to his own emotions and the natural world, concerned more with contemplation and meditation than with action.

What Bly and Moore and Gillette call the lover translates as a connection to the natural world for characters such as Taran. It may not represent the social context upon which Michael Kimmel and Robert Connell insist, but for the hero of fantasy it does imply a different direction: connectedness rather than domination and control. The difficulty with Bly and Moore and Gillette is that the lover archetype deals only obliquely with sexuality and desire. Garden work and a connection to the natural world happen in isolation, but the construction of gender needs to happen in relation to the opposite sex. This is certainly true for Taran. His newly fledged sense of desire occurs in relation to Eilonwy and Prince Rhun. The princess refuses to be objectified and given in marriage like a prize of war, while Rhun's impending marriage to Eilonwy further marginalizes Taran within the aristocratic hegemony, characterized by Prince Rhun, King Rhuddlum, and the other members of the court.

The figure of the gardener is important for Alexander, as well as for Tolkien and Le Guin. Tolkien incorporates gardens and gardeners into his texts and places both into the context of the heroic. His sweeping descriptions of landscape in *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*, as well as specific settings in both books such as the dark forest of Mirkwood or the festering Dead Marshes on the approach to Mordor, are unparalleled among writers of fantasy. He does, however, place gardens at intervals throughout his narrative. Bilbo and Frodo delight in their gardens, and the solid, dependable Sam Gamgee, who accompanies Frodo to Mordor to cast the ring of the Dark Lord into the fiery mountain, is a gardener. When he and Frodo find themselves in the forest of Ithilien, Sam drinks in the sights and smells of this sheltered part of the realm of Gondor, known as the Garden of Gondor. Other gardens that appear in the epic are the gardens of the Houses of Healing, the only gardens in the great stone city of Minas Tirith. The quiet thoughtfulness of the gardener, as well as the care and the cultivation that such spaces inspire, is embodied mostly in the hobbits. Nonetheless, the figure of the gardener forms an aspect of the heroic that Tolkien himself seems to have understood. In his biography of Tolkien, Humphrey Carpenter describes life for the family at North Moore Road near Oxford where Tolkien was an "enthusiastic gardener" (Carpenter 177), spending much time expanding the family's garden plot and caring for the lawn and roses. Given the importance Tolkien himself accorded the company of other men and how much emphasis falls upon heroes and the heroic in his books, the presence of the gardener and his own interest in gardens and the cultivation of living things suggests a connection to Bly and garden work, and even more that such work is necessary to an integrated sense of manhood.

Ironically, for Taran, the farm of Caer Dallben is much like a garden. Its boundaries are clear, and Coll, as an old turnip farmer, exhibits the attention to detail and growing things that characterizes Bly's gardener. It takes Taran the first four books to appreciate this nurturing, but he is first aware of it in the character of Medwyn, who embodies a quiet thoughtfulness and care for living things, later reflected in the figure of Adaon from the second of the chronicles.

As one who is sensual and integrated, the lover archetype is useful for explaining the development of Taran and the other Arthurians. Ged from Le Guin's *Earthsea* quartet best exemplifies this sensual connectedness. As a boy, and later as a man, Ged understands and has an affinity with animals and the natural world. His use name is Sparrowhawk, and in *A Wizard of Earthsea* he has an otak, a small, cat-like creature as a familiar. In her discussion of the hero, Margery Hourihan looks to this connectedness to the natural world as a subversion of one of the traditional ideologies of the hero story:

"Probably the trilogy's most profound challenge to patriarchal values inheres in the attitude to the natural world implied by the narrative point of view, an attitude which ultimately entails a denial of the very notion of mastery" (225). She identifies one of the major dualisms of the patriarchal hero story as that of civilization and wilderness, the rational and the ordered, set against the untamed and the threatening. The role of the traditional hero then is to master that wilderness, and in doing so, inscribe it with his own ideological stamp. Thus, gardening and the gardener suggest cultivation and nurturance, not the mastery of the traditional hero.

If Ged and his connectedness to the natural world is a subversion of traditional, patriarchal dualisms, the same is true for Taran. Moreover, if such connectedness subverts patriarchal ideologies, then the figure of the gardener and the connection to the natural world constitute that subversive force. Taran, like Ged, has a connection to the animal world, first through his responsibility as the assistant keeper to Hen Wen, and later when he befriends the wounded gwythaint that eventually tells Gwydion where to find the missing Hen Wen. Taran feels this connectedness most keenly when he receives the brooch from Adaon in *The Black Cauldron*. The brooch not only gives him a stronger intuitive sense that borders on prescience (as when he tells the companions to leave the overhang during the rainstorm to escape being crushed), but it heightens his awareness of the natural world. This is Taran's first experience of such connectedness. Adaon, who bequeaths Taran the brooch before his death, is probably the best example of the lover archetype in Alexander: a strong and sensitive man, acutely aware of the world around him, and skilled in music and healing. Taran's brief ownership of the brooch gives him a new appreciation of the natural world, but more importantly, it reinforces those qualities inherent to connectedness that are there from the beginning of the series.

iv. Meeting the Erotic Feminine

Bly's gardener and Moore and Gillette's lover are sensual, but they are not necessarily sexual. The princess, the woman with golden hair, however, is the embodiment of the erotic; she is, according to Bly, the woman of mythology, whose radiance bestows itself upon a living woman. The difficulty for a contemporary man, therefore, is the inability to distinguish between that which is mythological and that which is real:

> What does it mean when a man falls in love with a radiant face across the room? It may mean that he has some soul work to do. His soul is the issue. Instead of pursuing the woman and trying to get her alone, away from her husband, he needs to go alone himself, perhaps to a mountain or cabin, for three months, write poetry, canoe down a river and dream. That would save some women a lot of trouble. (137)

Such a perception makes women either unattainable or objects of conquest, both of which arise out of a hegemonic construction and subjugation of women. Nonetheless, in the context of the story, Bly's erotic feminine arrives at a crucial point in the young man's initiation. He is developing into the lover, maturing within the confines of the walled garden. Moreover, even as the Wild Man can see the potential in the young man at the sacred spring, the princess is able to recognize the gardener's boy for more than what he appears. However, at this point in the story, there is a marked resistance to the erotic feminine because the young man is not ready. He brings the princess wild flowers, but he will not let her pull off his head covering. This figure of the erotic feminine appears in other folk and fairy tales and heralds developmental change. Campbell points to this same change in such folktales as "Sleeping Beauty" and "Rapunzel," when the prince discovers the beautiful princess who embodies the sublimated power of the feminine erotic.

Alexander and his contemporaries tend to treat the erotic feminine either obliquely or not at all. There is a marked absence of women of any kind in Tolkien's *The Hobbit*, while *The Lord of the Rings* has women occupying more passive roles or sporting masculine qualities. Belladonna Took has a passing mention as Bilbo's dead mother at the beginning of *The Hobbit*, but the only other women mentioned throughout the course of the adventure are the generic women of Lake-town, who weep and huddle after the destruction of the town by the dragon. As for Tolkien's epic, one of the central female characters and one of the most powerful elves in Middle-earth is Galadriel, the elven queen of Lothlorien. In part the figure of the temptress, she is the Lady of the Golden Wood and rules Lothlorien in fact if not in name. She is a masculinized character, being "no less tall than the lord" (173) and having a voice that was "deeper than woman's wont" (174). The only two female characters who come close to the erotic feminine are Arwen and Eowyn. Aragorn has committed himself, body and soul, to Arwen, daughter of Elrond, half-elven, but the only sexual tension in the book exists between Aragorn and Eowyn, the shield-maiden of Rohan. These two first notice one another in the hall of the King of the Mark, and after the battle of Helm's Deep, Eowyn begs Aragorn to let her accompany him on the Paths of the Dead, a haunted pass through the mountains by which Aragorn must travel if he is to come to the aid of the besieged city of Minas Tirith. He refuses to allow her to accompany him, and their subsequent parting is grievous. The tension persists until Aragorn brings Eowyn back from the brink of death after the battle of the Pelennor fields. This tension forms a minor subplot, but it also forms something of a contrast to the tale of Aragorn and Arwen contained in the appendices to *The Return of the King*, which in its turn forms a parallel to one of the central myths of Middle-earth, the tale of Luthien and Beren.

Le Guin also treats the erotic feminine in the *Earthsea* books but in a different way. The second book of her quartet, *The Tombs of Atuan*, is dominated by female characters, and most of the women are defined in relation to the Godking, the supreme ruler of the Kargad empire. Kossil is the high priestess of the Godking's temple, and she wields her authority in the Godking's name. When Ged breaks into the under tomb, the great cavern beneath the Hall of the Throne, Kossil insists that Ged's violation of the tombs be paid for with his life. Arha is mistress of the tombs, and it is through her act of saving Ged's life and reclaiming her name that we see something of the erotic feminine. According to Le Guin, *The Tombs of Atuan* is, "in a word, about sex" (*Language* 48). Ged gives Arha back her childhood name, Tenar, and her subsequent struggle to free herself from the imprisoning effect of the tombs is her struggle with her maturing sexuality. She re-claims her name and her life, and she helps Ged to escape the tombs, sailing away with him from the Kargad empire. Even though this awakening of sexual consciousness is more about female sexuality than the masculine experience of the feminine erotic, Tenar's awareness of this consciousness is a response to the integrated nature of the erotic in Ged.

Where Le Guin's book treats female sexuality in broad symbolic terms, *The*

Castle of Llyr is less about sexual tension or sexuality than it is about the popular romantic. Taran's feelings for the princess are changing. While on the way to meet the ship that will take Eilonwy to the Isle of Mona, Taran begins to experience desire. Half angrily, he says to Coll, "'I will miss her'" (*Castle* 12), but he is uncomfortable at the thought of trying to tell the princess of his feelings. Taran's unsettledness concerning the princess suggests that desire is at work, but Taran does not know how to respond to these new feelings.

Eilonwy becomes the object of Taran's desire, but because the series is considered to be all-ages fantasy, the erotic gets couched in terms of the popular romantic. Eilonwy of the red-gold hair is the savvy princess, beautiful, hot tempered, and discerning, but at the same time, she represents Alexander's attempt to portray a contemporary female in high fantasy. Because Taran's understanding of gender becomes bound up with his relationship with Eilonwy, it is necessary to first address Eilonwy's function in relation to Taran in the earlier books, and examine how that role changes by the third of the chronicles, before proceeding to place her in the context of Taran's initiation into the erotic.

v. The Princess and the Pig-Keeper

The interaction between Taran and Eilonwy throughout the first two books lays the foundation for the change in Taran's feelings. First appearing to Taran in *The Book of Three* when she comes up through one of the large flagstones in the floor of Taran's prison cell, Eilonwy is Taran's rescuer and his equal, at least in terms of physical stature: "one or two years younger than he, but fully as tall" (*Book* 69). On the other hand, she is unquestionably Taran's superior in terms of wit, temper, and discernment. He meets the princess from the wrong side of a cell in Spiral Castle when her bauble falls through the grating of the door. Taran's weary assertion that she can't come and get her bauble because the door is locked introduces Taran to her pointed way of making remarks: "'What would be the point of having someone in a dungeon if they weren't locked up? Really, Taran of Caer Dallben, you surprise me with some of your remarks. I don't mean to hurt your feelings by asking, but is Assistant Pig-Keeper the kind of work that calls for a great deal of intelligence?'" (*Book* 66). With respect to this initial meeting between

Taran and Eilonwy, Jill May points out its similarity to the Grimms' tale "The Frog King," but the comparison does not add up to much. Unlike the princess who breaks her promise to the frog, Eilonwy follows through on her promise to help Taran escape Spiral Castle, and her mistake in rescuing Fflewddur instead of Gwydion is a result of Taran's cryptic instructions, not any unwillingness on her part.

Outside the ruined castle, the newly formed companions argue about how to proceed, and Taran attempts to assume something of the authority of Gwydion, his first effort to emulate what he has seen of Prydain's hegemony. He wants to be the hero, to journey to Caer Dathyll to warn the Sons of Don about the Horned King, and he asks that Fflewddur conduct "this girl" – an indignant Eilonwy – safely to her own people. Eilonwy, on the other hand, objects: "'I don't like being called '*a* girl' and '*this* girl' as if I didn't have a name at all'" (*Book* 114), and objects to being shoved and shunted about to satisfy Taran's honour. She decides to go with Taran, and Taran clumsily admits to the sense in the four of them staying together for the sake of safety. The topsy-turvy equality between Eilonwy and Taran lasts throughout the first and second books, and their bickering is a result of their relative youth, not of any romantic attachment. By the third book, however, Taran and Eilonwy are entering adulthood, and this change requires a different education, as well as a different coming of age for Eilonwy than for Taran.

Taran's new awareness of Eilonwy in *The Castle of Llyr* is linked as much to Eilonwy's departure as it is to his own growth and development. The princess is being sent to the Isle of Mona for the sake of her education, "to learn how a princess is to behave" (*Castle* 10), something which Dallben is ill equipped to handle. As he says to the princess with an embrace on the doorstep of the cottage: "'You shall always have a place in Caer Dallben, … and a larger one in my heart. But alas, raising a young lady is a mystery beyond even an enchanter's skill. I have had … difficulties enough raising an Assistant Pig-Keeper'" (*Castle* 9-10). In this way, Eilonwy's departure for the purpose of being educated heightens Taran's awareness of his own desire.

vi. The Aristocratic Mother

In addition to introducing Taran to his desire for the princess, the adventure on the Isle of Mona introduces the figure of the mother in an aristocratic context. The queen of

Mona stands in sharp contrast to Eilonwy and Achren, but she is no less troubling to Taran and his sense of his place within the hierarchy of Prydain. The ritualistic, archetypal, and mythopoetic models separate the initiate from the mother's realm, which in turn forces boys away from their mothers into a relationship with their fathers. This is only partly true for Taran. Ritual initiation makes this severance most clear in acting out the death of the initiate to the mother's world through the wounding and removal of boys from the community. Du Toit, Eliade, and Campbell discuss in detail this severance in terms of ceremonies of wounding or circumcision, and in each case it represents a clear break from the mother. For Bly, separation from the mother is symbolized in stealing the key from under the mother's pillow and making the decision to follow the Wild Man into the forest. Mothers do not, for the most part, make another appearance following such ceremonies of severance. The exception here is Campbell, who reintroduces the mother archetype as one of the tests the hero must face on his quest.

Among the five writers of fantasy I am considering, mothers hardly have a place at all. Most of these Arthurian heroes do not have a mother, which creates a rather conspicuous gap. Witches, hags, maids, and temptresses populate these books, but mothers hardly make an appearance. Will Stanton's mother in *The Dark is Rising* is traditionally nurturing and represents the only active mother in any of the books. This absence is natural enough because, just as it is for the initiates in the initiatory models, mothers are what the Arthurian heroes must separate from. In her discussion of the hero story, Hourihan suggests that this separation is consistent with the hero story and its accompanying dualisms:

> [The hero's] dealings with women and girls can hardly be described as relationships since the women exist merely as motifs in his story. His mother is more important to the hero than the women he encounters on his quest, but she is left behind when he goes off into the wilderness. The story inscribes the public/private dualism and asserts that the wilderness, the wide world, is a place for men. Women do not belong there: the domestic sphere of home is their place. Those who do turn up in the wilderness, being out of their place, are likely to be dangerous, aiming either to do away with the hero or to lure him from his quest.

(75)

Women as such motifs appear on the quests of the Arthurian heroes, but they are by no means representative. Serret in *A Wizard of Earthsea* is a temptress, but Eilonwy in the Prydain books is a character in her own right, which is true for many of Alexander's women. Alexander is the most consistent in his representation of women as characters rather than as motifs, with the possible exception of Le Guin, particularly in *The Tombs of Atuan* and *Tehanu,* the second and fourth books in the *Earthsea* quartet.

The appearance of the mother in the third of the Prydain chronicles in an archetypal and social context therefore represents something of a departure in the light of the traditional hero story, but it also polarizes Taran's experience of the mother and introduces the aristocratic in a way that once again marginalizes Taran and brings him closer to his woundedness. Once Taran and the companions reach the Isle of Mona, they are introduced to the mother in the person of Queen Teleria, who adds a new complication to Taran's encounter with the feminine. The Castle of Mona is distinct from many of the strongholds in Prydain because of the aristocratic nature of the court, the ladies in waiting, and Queen Teleria herself, who presents a much different picture from that of a character such as Achren, Teleria being "a stout, pleasant-looking woman dressed in fluttering white garments" (*Castle* 23). Teleria is neither motif nor archetype, more ineffectual than nurturing, and suggests a stereotype of fussing, motherly concern:

> "Welcome Daughter of Angharad," Queen Teleria began, returning to Eilonwy. "Your presence honours – don't fidget, child, and stand straight – our Royal House." The Queen stopped suddenly and took Eilonwy by the shoulders. "Good Llyr!" she cried. "Where did you get those frightful clothes? Yes, I can see it's high time Dallben let you out of that hole-and-corner in the middle of the woods." (*Castle* 23)

Queen Teleria is almost a parody of motherhood. She makes Taran more aware of his social status and helps to place his growing consciousness of desire in the context of social class.

Even more than in *The Black Cauldron*, Taran's concern about birth and worth finds a new foothold in the third chronicle. His consciousness of his orphan status consumes him through to the third book, but in *The Castle of Llyr* that concern is reduced from the state of Taran's honour to that of his cloak. He is embarrassed by the notice Queen Teleria takes of his torn garment and feels awkward and self-conscious among the members of the court.

Taran may be, as Jon Stott suggests, a democratic hero, but he is more than unusually aware of not being a part of the aristocratic class in Prydain, which further exacerbates the tension between Taran's desire for Eilonwy and his need to know his parentage. This class system, peculiar to the Isle of Mona, is more British and aristocratic than elsewhere in Prydain, such as in the cantrevs where the lesser kings and cantrev lords resemble Welsh chieftains. Smoit, whom Taran encounters more fully in the fourth book, is a king, but even as a king he is less removed from the petty chieftains: he is their overlord, but he is also a brawler and a war leader in his own right. King Rhuddlum does not have the masculine authority of Gwydion; he is, however, complicit with that authority. The situation on Mona is different. When Taran and the companions arrive on Mona, they find an actual court, with ladies in waiting, the attentive chief steward Magg ready to serve, and King Rhuddlum and Queen Teleria themselves, who seem more royal, if less capable, than the other members of the aristocracy Taran has encountered thus far.

What adds to Taran's discomfiture is the contrast between him and Prince Rhun, the son and heir to King Rhuddlum and Queen Teleria. Prince Rhun, well meaning, good natured, and devoid of sense, serves as a counterpoint to Taran, just as Ellidyr in *The Black Cauldron* serves a similar function. The Prince is young, plump-faced, irritatingly cheerful, and entirely unheroic. Unlike Taran, the prince cannot assume any of the authority of the hegemony.

The meeting with Rhun again raises the issue of birth for Taran, who becomes aware of himself as an Assistant Pig-Keeper in a way that he had not before, especially next to the feckless Prince, born into his title without having to earn his place. The tension between Taran and Rhun is different from that between Taran and Ellidyr: Ellidyr functions as a polar opposite to Adaon, with Taran caught between the two and caught in turn between his desire for glory and desire for wisdom. Ellidyr, despite his abrasive nature, contributes to the attempt to take Dark Gate and later serves the companions by throwing himself into the cauldron. Rhun, however, is a nuisance, constantly getting in the way and contributing little to either the search for Eilonwy or the confrontation with Achren.

The one-sided tension between Taran and Prince Rhun comes to a head in the search for the missing princess. King Rhuddlum confides his hope to Taran that Rhun and Eilonwy will eventually wed, while telling him that he, not Rhun, will lead the search, together with the chief huntsman. The knowledge of these plans for Eilonwy's future has the effect of putting Taran in his place, as it were. His response to Fflewddur's awkward musings about what the bard had hoped for Taran and Eilonwy, "'despite all the squabbling and bickering between the two of you'" (63), suggests the full impact of the news for Taran: "'Do not mock me,' Taran burst out, reddening. 'Eilonwy is a Princess of the House of Llyr. You know my station as well as I. Such a hope has never been in my mind. It is only fitting for Eilonwy to be betrothed to one of her own rank.' Angrily he drew away from the bard and galloped ahead" (*Castle* 62-63). Taran's anger speaks of the bitterness he feels over his birth, but King Rhuddlum, like Morgant in *The Black Cauldron*, has no trouble recognizing Taran's worth, seeing him as "a brave lad, and honourable" (*Castle* 59). It also suggests that Taran's awareness of the erotic and the feminine is tied to his sense of grief and self-worth.

The unheroic Prince Rhun and his well-meaning parents give this book a different cast from that of the other four. The book moves from the archetypal to the aristocratic, and Taran feels the unfairness of rank acquired by birth. This focus on the aristocratic is the American coming out in Alexander, for Taran's sense of injustice helps to focus the attention of the narrative on the incongruity between Taran and Prince Rhun. Nowhere else does Taran feel so keenly his position in the social hierarchy of Prydain. Moreover, *The Castle of Llyr* represents a shift in the series as a whole. Jill May suggests that it is with the third of the chronicles that the series shifts away from being anything like a retelling of the Welsh sources to being that of an American hero tale: "*The Castle of Llyr* is the shortest book in the series, yet it is extremely important because it marks the series' turning point: from this book on, this is an American fantasy series, not a retelling of Celtic legend. The reader understands that Alexander is telling an American hero story and that he is not using the Celtic materials in traditional ways" (42-43). The third book, according to May, is more American because of Taran's awareness of his feelings for Eilonwy and his belief that he cannot hope to marry her because of his birth. Alexander's shift from the romance to the popular romantic, however, does not necessarily Americanize the chronicles. As Frye points out, love and adventure lie at the heart of romance, so in this sense Alexander stays fully within this form.

Nonetheless, the nature of Taran's Americanness in relation to social class is a question that occupies most of Alexander's critics. Norma Bagnall, in "An American Hero in Welsh Fantasy: *The Mabonogion*, Alan Garner and Lloyd Alexander," compares the British class structure that appears in Alan Garner's *The Owl Service* to that in the Prydain series. She describes how the British class system is responsible for the tension between the three young people in Garner's book. *The Owl Service* takes place in a Welsh valley thick with enchantment, and the young people find themselves acting out the murder of Goronwy from "Math, Son of Mathonwy," the fourth branch of the Mabinogi. Garner, unlike Alexander, draws specifically on one of the four branches of the Mabinogi to inform his text. There are two realities in the text: the narrative present overlaid with class tension and the intertextual use of "Math, Son of Mathonwy," but which lacks the same aristocratic tension.

Bagnall contends that Taran is an American hero because Alexander's series does not focus on class in the same way as Garner's. She has little to say about the third book, but draws chiefly upon *Taran Wanderer* to support the democratic nature of Taran's heroism: "Taran's self-education and his willingness to sacrifice for others, though he is not of noble birth, make him a hero, an American Hero" (8). The idea that self-sacrifice is particularly American is a weak thread on which to hang Taran's Americanness. Nonetheless, she identifies self-education and self-sacrifice as being American traits and points out that characters like Coll are noble in bearing despite their place in the social hierarchy of Prydain. Coll is a turnip farmer, but Gwydion and Dallben recognize him as a hero. She further points out that Taran continually meets people who possess a kind of nobility despite their rank, such as the people of the Commots whom Taran meets in the fourth chronicle, and whom Lois Kuznets says resemble American frontiersmen of the nineteenth century.

Many of the characteristics that Bagnall identifies as American seem nonetheless equally relevant to the hero of folktale. Taran's status as an orphan, his kindness to animals, and the fact that Medwyn asks him to remain in the hidden valley, not to mention the sacrifices he makes for his companions, make him as much a folktale hero as they do a democratic one. Moreover, even though Taran becomes High King by virtue of his choice to remain in Prydain at the end of the series, he fulfills the prophecy contained in *The Book of Three*, more or less in spite of himself.

vii. Meeting the Archetypal Feminine

Taran's attempt to rescue Eilonwy from the tower and the subsequent confrontation with Achren in the hall of the ancient castle remove the text from issues of social class and place it in relation to the encounter with the archetypal feminine. Sam Keen identifies the archetypal feminine as the consuming, subsuming, inexorable force that men must separate from in order to grow up. For Taran and the other Arthurian heroes, this figure is often one of temptation and seduction, a threat or force to confront in order for the journey to continue. This representation of womankind is problematic for such critics as Robert Connell, Michael Kimmel, and Margery Hourihan, but the model, nonetheless, has a place in Taran's development.

Michael Meade, in *Men and the Water of Life: Initiation and the Tempering of Men*, best explains how the encounter with the archetypal feminine can interfere with the masculine. In his commentary on "The Boy and the Half-Giantess," Meade describes the encounter between the young hero and the half-giantess, the monstrous form of a half-woman, whose thirst and hunger cannot be satisfied. According to Meade, this story exemplifies the masculine psyche as it ventures into the territory of the feminine, which for Meade happens after the son receives the wound from the father. He says that such archetypal forces have the power to subsume the masculine psyche, and the boy's only response is to run home after seeing the rage and grief of the giantess when she can neither slake her thirst nor satisfy her hunger.

Meade explains how such a story enables many men to encounter and address the feminine in a safe way, as opposed to expressing the fear and hatred against women in their own lives:

> The presence of poetic metaphor and mythic stories can break the spell of literalism that restricts the world of the feminine to the personal mother and to actual women. If there are only men present and they relate to the feminine beings in the story, then troubles with those beings exist in the men, not simply in women. The tendency to literalize the feminine in the psyche as actual women is one source of men's tremendous fear of women and the recurrent violence toward them. When men turn to the inner feminine, however, they run the risk of activating the spells around the wounded feminine inside, which can reduce them to spellbound boys. The half-giantess represents an answer to both problems: She can't be literalised because she's only half visible and her disturbing incompleteness keeps everyone awake. She also represents the way the modern world can't grasp the full powers of the feminine forces in people or in life. (90)

Such a story, according to Meade, allows men to experience the power of the feminine, but more importantly, it removes the archetypal weight of the mother from flesh and blood women into a realm where she can be met. Meade is addressing two problems at once: the danger of personalizing what is largely a hegemonic subjection of women, and the danger of literalising female archetypes from myth and story. The story itself displaces the power of such female archetypes into a form that can be apprehended, internalizing the struggle with the feminine and making it an identifiable aspect of the masculine process. Meade's comments may appear to reflect what Kimmel calls the "flight from the feminine," but they suggest the way in which story forms the intersection between myth, literature, and men's experience.

In the archetypal model, the feminine takes a different form, but it still has the power of the great mother, that creative/destructive force of myth and folktale. For Campbell, the meeting with the archetypal feminine occurs as part of the road of trials for the hero. It appears in terms of infantile complexes and with the archetypal feminine, the great mother, or goddess of creation who has the ability to bestow infinite joy and satisfaction:

> The goddess is red with the fire of life; the earth, the solar system, the galaxies of

> far-extending space, all swell within her womb. For she is the world creatrix, ever mother, ever virgin. She encompasses the encompassing, nourishes the nourishing, and is the life of everything that lives. She is also the death of everything that dies. The whole round of existence is accomplished within her sway, from birth through adolescence, maturity, and senescence, to the grave. She is the womb and the tomb: .... Thus she unites the "good" and the "bad," exhibiting the two modes of the remembered mother, not as personal only, but as universal. (114)

Campbell refers to this encounter with the universal feminine as the meeting with the goddess or "the blessed infancy regained" (36). The hero at once possesses and is possessed by the feminine principle. The hero's journey, however, does not stop here. The nurturing mother becomes the temptress, as the hero lapses into what Campbell calls "the agony of Oedipus" (36). The hero must move beyond the engulfing feminine to an atonement with the father and the completion of the journey.

The temptress can be seen as the female figure who offers, as Campbell says, "infinite satisfaction," but she is also the seductress. The stories of the young King Arthur provide one of the most poignant examples of the power of the seductress. Arthur's half sister, Morgos, seduces the young king, from which union Mordred is born, the bastard son who will eventually bring about the downfall of his father's kingdom. The archetypal feminine has power over the male psyche. The seductress is a non-particular, sexualized figure that can be attached to particular characters. Serret, for example, in Le Guin's *A Wizard of Earthsea,* is the seductress. When she first meets Ged as a sullen boy of thirteen in the meadows above the house of his master, Ged vows to show her a spell of transformation, which leads to the first portent of the shadow that Ged will release on Roke. Ged does not return to the meadow, but he meets Serret again in the court of the Terrenon, while he is trying to escape the shadow beast that he released from unlife with the same spell he found on the day he wished to prove himself to her. In the court, she tries to convince Ged to assume the power of an ancient, speaking stone that lies in a locked room beneath the castle.

As for Taran, like the prince of fairy tale, he climbs up the tower in the dark and enters the window of the chamber where Eilonwy lies sleeping. Campbell refers to this motif of the sleeping princess in folktales as that which introduces the feminine and represents the penultimate goal of the hero:

> She is the paragon of all paragons of beauty, the reply to all desire, the bliss-bestowing goal of every hero's earthly and unearthly quest. She is mother, sister, mistress, bride. ... For she is the incarnation of the promise of perfection; the soul's assurance that, at the conclusion of its exile in a world of unorganized inadequacies, the bliss that once was known will be known again: the comforting, the nourishing, the "good" mother - young and beautiful - who was known to us, and even tasted, in the remotest past. Time sealed her away, yet she is dwelling still, like one who sleeps in timelessness, at the bottom of the timeless sea. (110-11)

This figure of the sleeping princess becomes an aspect of the archetypal feminine in all of its raw power. Campbell offers less of a distinction between these various aspects of the feminine and suggests that a figure like the sleeping princess gives the hero access to all of the nourishing power of the mother, without any of the accompanying threat.

After he climbs in through the window of the tower, Taran finds a sleeping princess whom he cannot wake. In fairy tale proportions, the scene is parallel to Taran's first meeting with the princess when her bauble falls through the grating of Taran's cell in Spiral Castle. Like his first meeting with the princess that recalls "The Frog King," Taran's discovery of the enchanted princess recalls "Rapunzel" and countless other tales where the hero comes upon a sleeping or enchanted princess.

The encounter in the tower, however, comes to nothing for Taran, for try as he might he is unable to reach the enchanted Eilonwy. He urges her to try to remember: "'Think, ...Remember Caer Dallben - Coll - Hen Wen ...' Through the casement the sea wind carried trails of mist like tangled vines. Taran spoke the names again and the names of the companions. Eilonwy's glance was so distant that she herself seemed far from the chamber" (*Castle* 168). Taran tries to remove Eilonwy from the chamber, but she strikes him, and in her eyes Taran sees something of the scorn and cruelty of Achren. Eilonwy is subject to powers too strong for her. Taran recognizes that the princess is in danger of being swallowed by her own and Achren's desire for power. Achren is Campbell's destructive feminine. She is the witch of folktale, the ogress, the demonic mother who would roast Hansel in the oven or eat the children of Sleeping Beauty. Eilonwy's heritage as the Princess of the House of Llyr has the potential to make her into an enchantress just like Achren herself, from the savvy princess to the destructive feminine. In spite of the criticism that Alexander's series is fundamentally patriarchal, Eilonwy has the opportunity to be at least as powerful as any of the male characters in the series.

After his attempt to liberate Eilonwy, Taran encounters the fullness of the archetypal mother in the figure of Achren in the hall of the ancient Castle of Angharad just off the coast of Mona. She appears as eternally evil and entirely corrupt:

> "And Caer Colur shall rise more glorious than ever. Its Great Hall shall be the seat of power over all Prydain. The Lord of Annuvin himself shall kneel in homage to me." Achren's voice fell nearly to a whisper; a cold fire burned over her pale features. Her eyes were no longer on the companions, but far beyond them. "Arawn of Annuvin shall cower and beg for mercy. But his throne shall be toppled. It was I, Achren, who showed him the secret ways to power. He betrayed me and now he shall suffer my vengeance. It was I who ruled Prydain before him and none dared question my dominion. Thus shall it be once more. Thus shall it be ever more." (*Castle* 180-81)

Achren claims to have taught Arawn the secrets of power. Her assertion suggests the pre-eminence of female power in Prydain, and, as Gwydion points out, Achren's domination of Prydain would look little different from that of Arawn's. Moreover, Achren's hatred of Arawn comes from the Death-Lord's betrayal, which suggests that the struggle for dominance in Prydain is founded on gender and sexual tension.

The final scene in the hall of the castle offers a tableau in which Taran faces the feminine in terms of the archetypal and the erotic. Taran and the companions are in a stalemate with Achren and Eilonwy in the great hall. Achren demands the book and the golden paladryn from the companions, which Rhun mistakenly reveals to be in their possession. Achren turns to Taran and sees his longing for the princess and a title of his own: "'Lord Gwydion himself cannot gain for you what you hold dearest; indeed, he can bring about only her death. But I can give you her life. Yes, a gift only I can bestow. And more, much more . ... With me the Princess Eilonwy shall be a queen. But who shall be her king?'" (*Castle* 184-85). Taran struggles against the whispered words of the enchantress, as well as his memory of their first meeting in Spiral Castle. Like Campbell's hero of the monomyth, he is tempted by the feminine with his heart's desire, but he is able to resist. His situation echoes Campbell's temptation of the hero, Bly's mother who keeps the golden key under her pillow, the raging half giantess in Meade, as well as the mama's boy in Moore and Gillette, forever rejecting and being drawn to the mother. Eilonwy makes her choice. The book of spells is destroyed in fire, and Magg opens the sluice-gates to let in the sea. The dissolution in fire and water that follows is a spectacular end for Eilonwy and Taran, emblematic of the loss of an old way of life for each of them: Eilonwy gives up her heritage as an enchantress to become a "girl" and return to the court of Mona, while Taran's long agonizing over his birth and worth comes to an end as does his adolescence. Eilonwy recovers from her sleep, and she and Taran make a pledge on the shore of the sea not to forget one another until Eilonwy can return home to Caer Dallben.

The pledge between Taran and Eilonwy is the manifestation of Taran's encounter with the feminine. His feelings for the princess introduce desire and the erotic into Taran's development, and the result of this encounter is a deepening of his own coming of age. More specifically, Taran's encounter with the feminine is as much a struggle with himself as with the women he meets, this struggle being informed in different ways by each of the models of initiation, as well as the social hierarchy of Prydain. Taran's encounter shares something of the erotic and the sensual with Bly and Moore and Gillette, as well as Campbell, but more importantly he furthers his understanding of social interaction and his place within the aristocratic hegemony of Prydain. Taran discovers himself as desiring subject through his feelings for Eilonwy, and his encounter with mother as aristocrat and archetype forces him back to a place of woundedness and temptation. What sets Taran apart from each of the initiatory models is that his encounter with the feminine is largely in the context of his own feelings of worth as an Assistant Pig-Keeper in an aristocratic world. *The Castle of Llyr* marks a turning point in the series, but not because Taran becomes more American as a hero. Encountering the feminine in these various forms forces him to confront the question of his own parentage that has tormented him from the beginning of the series. Taran's desire to wed Eilonwy will finally force him to confront his deepest fears of not being nobly born and discover new depths of shame and grief in the meeting with his father and beyond, to the end of his journey and the end of doubt.

Chapter 6

The Meeting with the Father

The final phase of the road of trials for Taran occurs when he decides to seek his parents and discover who he is. Taran's obsession with birth and worth dominates the first three books, but his desire to ask for Eilonwy's hand in marriage forces him to seek the truth about his birth in *Taran Wanderer.* Taran has entered the public arena where men interact with men and learned what it means to be a hero. He has become a desiring subject and recognized the object of his desire. He has been both authorized and marginalized by Prydain's aristocratic hegemony. The confrontation with the man who calls himself Taran's father serves as the catalyst that brings Taran into a new relationship with that hegemony. In this confrontation with Craddoc, Taran comes to the end of his time of testing, and enters manhood with a new sense of authority that will ready him for kingship.

Central to this fourth of the chronicles is the quest, Taran's quest to discover his parentage. His search follows Campbell's monomyth more than the ritualistic or mythopoetic models, and it represents, in miniature, the general forward movement of the entire series. Taran departs from Caer Dallben, which again enacts the archetypal separation from home and community, and his quest takes him across Prydain, east to the Marshes of Morva, and west to the Llawgadarn Mountains in search of the Mirror of Llunet. On his journey, he meets a series of false fathers, until he confronts his own worst fears in the meeting with Craddoc, which becomes the meeting with the father in both archetypal and mythopoetic terms. The meeting renders Taran fatherless in a way that he had not been before, after which he journeys among the people of the western Commots as Taran Wanderer, no man's son, and no longer Assistant Pig-Keeper, but seeking only to discover his place in the world. The fourth in Alexander's series incorporates several elements, including separation and the quest, meeting the false father, meeting the father, reintroducing the wound, and nameless wandering.

For Taran in *Taran Wanderer,* the confrontation with the father is central to all of the initiatory models. The confrontation delineates the initiatory experience for boys.

Whether it is the rite of passage within a traditional society, the hero of folktale who confronts the god in his own hall, or the man who must finally come to terms with the father who beat, neglected, or abandoned him, the process is the same. According to these initiatory models, having to confront, recognize, or acknowledge the father is necessary for the boy to become the man.

Taran Wanderer places the meeting with the father as a necessary stage in Taran's coming of age, but it is also structurally integral unto itself. It returns Taran to his own beginning, as it were, and establishes the farm as the departure point for all of the five adventures. This book is structurally similar to Campbell's monomyth and follows the pattern of separation, initiation, and return. It is necessary for Taran to retrace his steps to arrive at a meeting with the father, but meet him he does. Taran departs from the farm in order to bargain with the hags in the Marshes of Morva as a way of discovering his birthright. When this fails, he encounters various father figures, all of whom want Taran as a surrogate son. Each encounter builds upon the preceding encounter and prepares Taran to meet the man who claims to be his father. The quest proper is for the Mirror of Llunet, a fabled enchanted pool that will tell the beholder whatever he or she wishes to know. Dorath, the ruffian leader of the band the companions encounter in the hills, needs to be treated separately from this group of false fathers, but he also helps to prepare Taran for the meeting with the man who claims to be his father. The meeting with Craddoc is central, and Taran's journey continues until he finds the mirror and finally gets an answer to his question. In arranging each of the encounters separately, the process by which Taran is brought into contact with his own woundedness through a confrontation with his father comes to light. Whatever Taran encounters up to this point, and whatever he goes on to meet afterwards, the confrontation with the father, as it is for each of the three models of initiation, moves him beyond the immaturity of boyhood, after which he leaves behind his conceptions of heroism and accepts his role as war leader in the fifth book of the series. In this way, it is possible to examine Taran's meeting with the father in terms of each of the three models of initiation, while demonstrating how Taran's changing sense of authority begins to transform him into a subversive force within Prydain's social structure.

i. Fathers and Father Surrogates

Du Toit, Eliade, and even Campbell describe initiation rituals wherein the older members of a tribe are responsible for the ritual indoctrination and education of the boys and young men. In *Configurations of Cultural Continuity*, du Toit's explanation of intergenerational transmission identifies the necessary role that the older members of a society play in initiation ceremonies, from performing the ritual separation of the boys from their mothers to teaching the initiates the stories and wisdom of the society. The ceremonies that du Toit and Eliade describe often include the ritual circumcision of boys by the older men. Such a ceremony, as well as other forms of ritual wounding, allows the older men to bring the boys across the threshold into manhood in a way that is both physical and intimate. In *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, Campbell also describes ritual circumcision ceremonies wherein the boys are taken from their mothers and circumcised by the older men of the tribe, and through which "the male phallus is made the central point ...of the imagination" (138). Campbell says that the act of circumcision is a literal cutting away of the boy from his mother, while at the same time introducing him into a new world.

The involvement of older men and the ritual wounding of boys in traditional societies becomes the confrontation between the father and son in Campbell's monomyth. Even though Campbell is writing in part from the perspective of traditional societies through his own references to such rituals, he still places the meeting or confrontation with the father at a key place in the Monomyth. It occurs as the final confrontation in the road of trials before the hero's apotheosis:

> Whether he knows it or not, and no matter what his position in society, the father is the initiating priest through whom the young being passes on into the larger world. And just as, formerly, the mother represented the "good" and "evil," so now does he, but with this complication - that there is a new element of rivalry in the picture: the son against the father for the mastery of the universe, and daughter against the mother to *be* the mastered world. (136)

The apotheosis of the hero is made with the help of the father or father figure. This apotheosis represents the union of opposites within the hero, not only the uniting of the two aspects of the father but also the union of the male and female principles in a new vision of the universe. Campbell cites mythical and religious examples from Buddhism, Hinduism, and Christianity that speak to such an apotheosis: the hermaphrodite seer Tiresias who speaks to Odysseus in the underworld, the enlightened Buddha, the great god Shiva, and the resurrection and return of Christ to the Father. Such mythological and religious figures speak of the transfiguration of the hero into the divine, but in human terms the boy or young man needs the assistance of the father or a father surrogate to complete his initiation.

The involvement of the father is equally important in Arthurian development. Taran and his counterparts may lack fathers, but they do not lack mentors or surrogate fathers. The confrontation with the father involves mostly absent or surrogate fathers and takes the form of either reconciliation with or distancing from the father. Aragorn in *The Lord of the Rings*, for example, experiences a loss and reconciliation with Gandalf, who in this case is as much a mentor as he is a father figure. Aragorn, along with the other members of the company of the ring, is struck with grief at the loss of Gandalf in the battle with the Balrog, an ancient demon of the underworld, when the company of the ring is trying to find its way out of the Mines of Moria. Later in the forest of Fangorn, Gandalf acknowledges the difficult choice Aragorn was forced to make in leaving Frodo and Sam to find their way to Mordor, while Aragorn, Legolas, and Gimli pursued the orcs that captured Merry and Pippin. The real moment of acknowledgment between the two comes after Aragorn is crowned king of Gondor, and they take a seldom used path behind the city of Minas Tirith and up the mountain. From where they stand, Aragorn can see the limits of his realm, from north to south to west, and in a symbolic gesture Gandalf bequeaths Aragorn the kingdom and blesses his rule. In this way Gandalf fulfils in part the role of the father, while also standing as guide, mentor, and friend.

This doubling of father and mentor also happens for Arren in *The Farthest Shore*. Ged, like Gandalf, is guide and mentor, but he is also a father surrogate to Arren. Arren's confrontation with Ged occurs while Ged is recovering from a spear wound on the rafts of the people of the open sea. Arren admits to his despair when Ged is struck down by a spear of one of the islanders they meet, after which he lets their little boat drift for days, suffering from thirst and sun, until the two are rescued by the raft people. Ged himself undergoes a recognition of father in *A Wizard of Earthsea*. Returning to Gont in hawk shape after running half way across the Archipelago from the shadow he has released from unlife, Ged kneels before Ogion and acknowledges the old man as his "true master" (*Wizard* 163). This doubling makes it possible for such characters to be both initiate and initiating priest.

Taran, like Aragorn and Arren, has no lack of mentors or father surrogates. Dallben and Medwyn serve in the capacity of the wise old man of the folktale, while Gwydion and Adaon are mentors and companions for Taran. Even Morgant is a role model, but he forms a clear contrast to Gwydion by the end of *The Black Cauldron* when he tries to convince Taran to join his plans to make use of the cauldron. The abundance of these father surrogates forms a further parallel between Alexander's series and the initiation of young men in so-called traditional cultures, but Taran lacks a flesh and blood father.

For the first three books in the series, Taran only plays at being the hero, while simultaneously authorized and marginalized by the aristocratic hegemony. By the time he decides to leave Caer Dallben to discover his parentage, he is ready to learn for himself what manhood means in terms of responsibility and authority, after which he acquires authority in his own right. *Taran Wanderer* is the book most set apart from the rest of the series, not because Taran's actions in this book have any less significance to the general forward movement of the series, but because the only thing at stake is Taran himself and his sense of identity. As Judith Mitchell says, it is Taran's "prose noviciate," but it is also a book-length treatment of Taran's attempt to come to grips with his status as an orphan, which lays the groundwork for Taran's coming to kingship in the final book.

However, kingship, like maturity, is hard won, and Taran's encounter with the father is central to that maturity. Because the encounter holds this place in Taran's development, the book recalls Bly's road of ashes, in which the young man in "Iron John" is plunged into loss and grief upon entering the castle of the second king, while his work in the kitchen causes what Bly calls the *katabasis*, or the loss of social status characteristic of the man's descent. Thus, Taran's quest for his parents can be read as both a variation on Campbell's monomyth and as a heroic depiction of the mythopoetic search for father.

The fourth chronicle begins shortly after Taran and Gurgi return from the adventure on Mona. Eilonwy is safely ensconced in King Rhuddlum's castle, learning what it means to be a young lady, but Taran can find no peace on the farm. He screws up his courage to approach Dallben and asks permission to leave the farm and seek the answer to his parentage. This departure differs from the others because of the deliberate nature of his quest. He is no longer content to remain on the farm, forever uncertain about his birth. He decides that he needs to know whether or not he is of noble birth, so he can ask for Eilonwy's hand in marriage. This deliberateness suggests courage on Taran's part, for he is prepared, at long last, to hear the truth about himself.

When Taran decides to confront Dallben on the question of his parentage, he ignores Coll's warning not to bother the enchanter and marches into the cottage to confront the old man. His entering Dallben's study recalls the scene at the beginning of the series where a young Taran is told to stay within the confines of the farm because of the threat of the Horned King. Taran, however, is no longer the boy with a head full of adolescent dreams of glory: he has the experience of the first three adventures under his belt, and his feelings for the princess have forced him to a decision. Taran cannot bide his time any longer, and his need to know his birthright outweighs his timidity: "'If there is honour – yes, let me share it. If there is shame, let me face it'" Taran says to Dallben (*Taran 12*). The enchanter gives Taran his blessing and sends him on his way. Taran seeks Dallben's permission to leave the farm, but the old enchanter's blessing amounts to the acknowledgment that is reminiscent of both Campbell's wise old man and Bly's mentor.

Taran's departure in the fourth chronicle is more that of the Campbellian hero than in any other book in the series, but his object is much more specific. As in his initial departure from Caer Dallben when he follows the oracular pig into the forest, Taran crosses the first threshold and enters into the realm of supernatural wonders to seek the answer to his question. He wants to learn of his lineage so that he may ask Eilonwy for her hand in marriage, believing he can do so only if he is of sufficiently noble birth. The structural similarities to Campbell's Monomyth are a key feature of *Taran Wanderer*, but the structure also contains elements which make the book distinct from other books in the series, as well as from the other models of initiation.

The meeting with the father is central to this text, but his desire for the princess lies behind Taran's need to know his parentage. In *The Secular Scripture*, Frye contends that the romance has always represented a popular form of literature, re-emerging in various ways century after century. Love and adventure, he says, are at the heart of romance, which becomes "lust and blood-lust" at its most popular (26). Alexander's series has adventure at its heart, while Taran's desire to wed the princess Eilonwy provides both the love interest and the motivation Taran needs to start him on his quest. Alexander's all-ages series never arrives at the "lust and blood-lust," but the series includes these basic features of the romance.

Both the *Prydain* books and the *Westmark* series share this degree of the popular romantic. Such a focus may point to the contemporary nature of Alexander's fantasy, but the difficulty is that Alexander's use of the romantic lacks depth; it never moves beyond a boy meets girl plot, all couched in terms of the heroic. Taran and Eilonwy snipe at and scrap with each other for the first three chronicles, after which it is clear that the two are going to be wed before the end of the series. Despite this lack, the marriage at the end of the series is appropriate, having a fairy tale quality that places the entire series back into the context of story.

Apart from Alexander's use of the popular romantic, *Taran Wanderer* makes much less use of the fantastic, save for the encounter with Morda, the black enchanter. This lessening of the fantastic in the fourth book suggests an assertion of Alexander's Americanness, wherein he makes Taran work his way across Prydain according to his own devices. There are no magical rescues, no sudden revelations of birth, just Taran slogging his way across Prydain, hauling himself up by his bootstraps and learning to be a man.

Alexander is determined that Taran learn what he needs to know without supernatural aid, and this lack of magic helps to characterize Taran as an American hero in contrast to his Arthurian counterparts. Upon leaving the farm, Taran and Gurgi journey toward the Marshes of Morva. Taran's plan, in as much as he has one, is to ask the three hags who live in the marshes for an answer to his question. He is prepared to strike a bargain, offering the enchantresses the dearest thing that will come into his hands as payment for what he wants to know, an action that is characteristic of his rashness and that recalls his bargain with the brooch in the second book. Taran, however, cannot purchase a birthright, and what he receives is an uncertain adventure to an uncertain end.

The nature of Taran's quest finds a counterpart in Arren's quest from *The Farthest Shore*. The young prince agrees to go with the Archmage to discover why magic seems to be seeping out of the world, and, like Taran, Arren has the chance to enter into a an uncertain quest with a man he doesn't know. Standing in the room on Roke, after breakfasting with seven of the nine masters of the school, Arren agrees to go with Ged on the adventure that will transform him from the courtly boy into the man who would be king. Ged is Arren's guide and mentor, the man who enables him to make the journey into and across the land of death to the far shores of the day. Prophecy, swords, and uncertainty form direct parallels between Arren's journey with Ged and Taran's search for his parents, and, as Lois Kuznets points out, even though Taran's development is much more democratic, both books are characterized by the bildungsroman of Arthurian development.

Taran has companions on his quest, but his only guide is his desire to know the truth about himself. Dallben has been both guardian and mentor, but the old enchanter releases Taran to his own devices at the beginning of the book, allowing Taran to discover the truth of his parentage, if he can. Once away from the farm, Taran reveals to himself and to Gurgi his reason for journeying to the marshes and shows himself in all of his hopeful, boyish, heroic immaturity: "'Could it not be that my parents were of noble lineage? And for some secret reason left me with Dallben to foster?'" (17). Taran gives voice to his naive hope that he is nobly born, something that he will not reveal, even to Dallben. Taran's desire is that he is nobly born, perhaps even the son of a king, in the hopes that sufficient noble birth will give him the authority to marry the princess.

Approaching the cottage in the marshes, Taran meets with a type of heroism that challenges his beliefs about himself. Taran claims some authority in having fought beside

Gwydion, recalling an earlier comment to Ellidyr during the council in the second book that fails to impress Orddu any more than it did Ellidyr: "'There are heroes and heroes. I don't deny he's acted bravely on occasion. He's fought beside Lord Gwydion and been as proud of himself as a chick wearing eagle's feathers. But that's only one kind of bravery. Has the darling robin ever scratched for his own worms? That's bravery of another sort. And between the two, dear Orwen, he might find the latter shows the greater courage'" (22-23). Orddu's ornithological admonition is as cutting as Ellidyr's accusation that Taran is quick to point out his accomplishments at the council. It also raises the question of heroism and Taran's position with respect to the hegemony. Taran has been granted a provisional kind of authority from Gwydion, and he has unquestioningly acted the part of the warrior in the search for the cauldron and Eilonwy, but his actions have always been tempered by his wish to be nobly born. Having to "scratch for his own worms" is not something Taran has had to do to this point. The enchantress gives Taran a reason to doubt himself and even refuses his offer of his greatest desire as payment for knowing his parentage. Orddu tells Taran about the Lake of Llunet and literally shoves him out the door. Taran is left standing outside the cottage, with doubt in his heart and a quest in the offing.

ii. The Absent Father

Father figures populate Taran's quest to discover his parentage. These men, in many respects, are the surrogate fathers or male mentors characteristic of both the ritualistic model and the other Arthurian heroes. Taran's quest, however, is more contemporary in that it is characterized by the absence of the father, in spite of the presence of so many father figures, but more than absence, Taran actually experiences a fracturing of the father in those surrogates who want to adopt him.

The absence of the father, according to Bly, is characteristic of western culture following the industrialization and urbanization of the late nineteenth century. He describes a process by which young men at one time accustomed their bodies to the father. Sons spent time with their fathers, working and learning the rhythms and moods of the male body. In this way, the sons of farmers or of craftsmen had the opportunity to learn intimately their fathers' skills. Bly says that the break with the mother is only a break, and months and sometimes years are necessary for the son to learn to adapt to "the harsh, sometimes demanding, testily humorous, irreverent, impatient, opinionated, forward driving, silence loving older masculine body" (94). For this separation to take place, young men need to be in close, physical proximity to their fathers, and this proximity is the very thing that many young men lack. The result, according to Bly, is "father hunger": sons who experience this hunger grow up into starved men who find it nearly impossible to relate to spouse, children, and other men.

Although Bly refers to the changing nature of father/son relationships in terms of this absence, it is possible to trace such a change both historically and economically. In "The Big Picture: Masculinities in Recent World History," Robert Connell offers a sketch of the development of hegemonic masculinity and why it is necessary to consider political and social change as part of that development. He contends that masculinity as personal practice is bound to social institutions, pointing to the family, the workplace/labour market, and the state as those institutions that define masculinity and gender relations. As a way of demonstrating how hegemonic masculinity is subject to change, Connell uses the example of gentry masculinity in the eighteenth century and how it gave way to economic and political change:

> We can speak of a gender order existing by the eighteenth century in which masculinity as a cultural form had been produced and in which we can define a hegemonic form of masculinity. This was the masculinity predominant in the lives of men of the gentry, the politically dominant class in most of Europe and North America. Economically based on land ownership, gentry masculinity did not emphasize rational calculation. It was not strongly individualized, being tied to lineage and kin networks. (608)

The past two hundred years, according to Connell, are a "history of the displacement, splitting, and remaking of gentry masculinity" (609). The bureaucrat and the businessman as social types, the development of the state, and the institutionalization of violence in national armies all contributed to the weakening of gentry masculinity and the development of a new dominant form.

As a dominant cultural force in the nineteenth century, hegemonic masculinity forced the subordination of other masculinities. Connell links the displacement of gentry masculinities by the bureaucrat and the businessman to the development of working class masculinities: "The separation of household from workplace in the factory system, the dominance of the wage form, and the development of industrial struggle, were conditions for the emergence of forms of masculinity organized around wage-earning capacity, skill and endurance in labor, domestic patriarchy, and combative solidarity among wage earners" (610). Such economic change no doubt had an impact on family dynamics and the ways in which father and sons relate, especially given Connell's contention that masculinity, of whatever type, is necessarily bound to social institutions such as the family.

In *Manhood in America: A Cultural History*, Kimmel also writes about masculinities in relation to social and economic change. The nineteenth century in America saw a new climate of competition with the growth of urban centres and the expansion of industry and its accompanying need for workers. According to Kimmel, the artisan was displaced by the factory worker, while the genteel patriarch took his last stand as the "confederate cavalier" in the American civil war (76). Kimmel points out that the self-control that characterized these two types was failing in the face of urban and industrial change, and "to middle-class American men the mid-nineteenth-century world often felt like it was spinning out of control, rushing headlong towards an industrial future" (44). Even the self-made man, the man whom Kimmel claims "seemed to be born at the same time as his country" (17), was on the run:

> One must be completely self-controlled, since in the new democracy there was no one else to look to for such control. Society was chock-full of equals - which is another way of saying it was full *of competitors.* Two choices seemed possible: stay and compete, or try to escape. American men chose both. They struggled to build themselves into powerful, impervious machines, capable of victory in any competition. And they ran away to the frontier, to the West, to start over, to make their fortunes and thus to remake themselves, to escape the civilizing constraints of domestic life represented by the Victorian woman. (44)

The frontier offered a place to affirm certain masculine qualities, but it was not the only escape or arena for competition for men during this period of change.

Kimmel points out that nineteenth-century America adopted exclusionary practices in politics, labour, and education. He states that even though "America has been from its birth a multicultural society, American manhood has often been built on the exclusion of others from equal opportunity to work, to go to school, to vote - to do any of the things that allow people to compete equally" (44). Such exclusionary practices resulted in two things: by appropriating the public arenas of work, politics, and education as "homosocial preserves of native born white men" (44), such men were better able to prove themselves as men; the practices also offered men an escape from women and the domestic sphere. Just as Connell says that masculinity and gender relations are bound up with the family and the marketplace, so they are here. The family dynamic had to change in light of this competition between men in nineteenth-century America. This is the America that Lloyd Alexander inherits.

iii. The Commoner Father

The beginning of *Taran Wanderer* represents a significant departure from each of the initiatory models. Taran is, almost literally, starting over again, but his object in departing from Caer Dallben is deliberate, unlike his rash departure in *The Book of Three*. In terms of its placement in the sequence, *Taran Wanderer* is the penultimate book in the series because of the meeting with the father, just as the same meeting for Campbell's hero is the penultimate stage of the monomyth. Taran has already been separated from home and the familiar. He has encountered mentors and the heroic; he has been tested and discovered grief. He has deepened his connection to the natural world, and he has encountered something of desire and the erotic. Now Taran needs to meet his father. Once again, like Campbell's hero, he must leave the farm and begin his quest to learn his parentage.

The cyclical nature of the chronicles is distinct from Campbell's archetype, in spite of the fact that the series follows the pattern of the archetypal model. Campbell's Monomyth relies on the general forward movement of the quest, which culminates in the meeting and atonement with the father, and the resolution of the conflict and return to the world of common day. Taran enacts this separation and return in each successive book, but Taran's meeting with the father leaves him no further ahead in his quest. In this way, Taran's initiation is not the straight forward separation, initiation, and return of the monomyth, in spite of the fourth chronicle's structural similarities to Campbell's work. The chronicles as a whole represent a series of concentric circles, each book in the series tightening the circle until Taran can arrive at the heart of the process, where lies the wound, the uncompromising and inescapable core of the initiation experience.

After Taran and Gurgi leave the Marshes of Morva, the book can be divided into two sections: the quest for the father and the quest for the lake. The fracturing of the father characterizes the first part of Taran's quest, and the meeting with each of these father fragments represents a series of false fathers whom Taran must acknowledge before moving on to the meeting with Craddoc. In this way, each of the meetings with the false fathers challenges Taran in a different way to continue with his quest, but in each case the offer of that which Taran seeks only emphasizes the absence of the father for Taran.

Alexander's critics see Taran's quest and these various meetings as the beginning of Taran's democratization. Norma Bagnall, Lois Kuznets, Jon Stott, and Jill May all point to the American nature of the fourth chronicle, as each step on his quest allows Taran to learn more about the value of hard work and independence. Bagnall, in particular, sees the *Prydain* series as an American retelling of the Welsh *Mabinogion* and Taran as an upholder of American ideals and the American dream. Judith Mitchell is the only dissenter when it comes to Taran's democratization. Through her comparison with the Wart in T. H. White's *The Sword in the Stone*, Mitchell places Taran's development in the context of kingship and removes the focus from democracy to moral development and kingship.

Such a focus on kingship brings Mitchell closest to the writers on initiation. As she points out, Taran's quest is a "book length vigil" for his introduction to kingship, and this preparatory nature of the book speaks directly to Taran's initiation. From an initiatory standpoint, this book is therefore distinct from the others in the series. The fracturing of the father, the series of encounters with these false fathers, and the final absence of the father that leaves Taran nameless and wandering all speak to the centrality of this book in Taran's process. Taran's need to know his father is central to his maturity, but his ability to reconcile himself to the absence of the father sets him free, both literally and metaphorically.

After leaving the marshes, Taran encounters the first false father, Aeddan, the gnarled old farmer who adds his stave to the fight with the henchmen of Lord Goryon. Taran and Gurgi are attacked by the men of Lord Goryon, who make off with Taran's stallion and Gurgi's pony, but with the help of Aeddan they are able to drive the warriors off. The old man advises Taran to come back to his hut and pursue his horse in the morning. During his stay in the hut, Taran meets Alarca, and for the first time he encounters some of the poorer folk of Prydain, those at the mercy of the brawling cantrev lords and completely removed from the world of heroes and enchantments that Taran has known since the beginning of the series.

This first of the false fathers is the commoner father, a man who embodies that class of peasant labourers in Prydain who are subordinated to the aristocratic hegemony, and who will rally around Taran in the final book of the series. As he walks into the little wattle and daub hut, Taran looks around with a sudden and new recognition of the people he has come amidst: "Never before in all his adventures had he shared hospitality with the farmer folk of Prydain, and he glanced around as wondering as a stranger in a new land" (*Taran* 37). Aeddan and Alarca's son had been killed during a raid, and they offer their son's jacket to Taran in a poignant gesture that suggests the couple's longing for their dead son. Taran returns the jacket upon his departure, but not before recognizing the value of the offer. The next morning Taran finds the farmer already at work in his field, and he finds a growing respect and admiration for the old man, looking soberly for a time at the fallow field, "barren for lack of hands to labour it" (41). Taran works for the morning beside the farmer in repayment for the night's lodging, and upon his departure the old couple offer him their house as a place of welcome.

The meeting with Aeddan and Alarca introduces several threads that become important throughout the remainder of Taran's quest and that figure prominently in Taran's decision to remain in Prydain at the end of the series. Taran meets with his first offer of parentage. The little hut is also his first place of welcome, and here, according to

Jill May and Jon Stott, Taran's democratization as a hero begins. Taran declines the offer to remain with the old couple, but he comes away with a greater respect for the work of the farm and the life the old couple are trying to live. Ironically, this is the very work that Coll, being responsible for the "practical side" of Taran's education, has rather unsuccessfully attempted to teach Taran throughout the first three books. Coll possesses the stoicism of the New England farmer, and Taran is finally able to recognize and respect this quality.

As the critics suggest, in *Taran Wanderer* Alexander begins to show his American colours. Aeddan is not an enchanter; he is not a warrior turned farmer; he is not a figure of romance. He is a farmer, plain and simple, a man who takes pride in the work of his hands and who is determined to have the ground yield the best crop possible, and who further recalls Michael Kimmels comments on the frontier spirit of the American west. When he finally reaches the Free Commots, Taran encounters many others like Aeddan, independent craftsmen who serve no cantrev lord, but his first encounter with the people he will eventually rule is in the hut of this farmer and his wife. Both May and Kuznets suggest Taran's work among these and other peasant farmers demonstrates American values of the self-made variety. May equates these peasant farmers with rural Americans, while they become American frontiersmen for Kuznets. May further states that Taran's time among the Commot folk helps prepare him for his status as a commoner, while according to Kuznets it allows Taran to rally what she calls "populist support" (Kuznets 29) for his cause in *The High King*. But the Americanness to which Bagnall and Kuznets refer speaks more directly to the characters and landscapes Taran encounters than it does to his development. Taran may indeed be gathering populist support as he journeys west into Prydain, but it is part of his noviciate to encounter and acknowledge these various father fragments, as well as to meet and interact with those people he will eventually rule.

iv. The Aristocratic Father

The next meeting with the father fragment or false father is with King Smoit, the aristocratic father. Smoit is very much like Michael Kimmel's genteel patriarch, but he is also a member of the aristocratic hegemony and uses violence as a means of maintaining his position. Nonetheless, Taran has the opportunity to show his capacity for justice and mercy in the matter of cows, and Smoit gives him the chance to have both a father and a kingdom. Taran and Gurgi journey by foot to the cantrev of Lord Gast to recover their mounts, but Taran also helps King Smoit to settle the dispute between Gast and Goryon over the cow Cornillo, and he helps Aeddan, whose fields were destroyed by the hooves of the warriors' horses. Because he is unable to endure the bickering between Gast and Goryon over the herd, or Smoit's determination to throw both of them into his dungeons, Taran offers a solution: one of them to divide the herd in half, the other to have first pick, and both to help Aeddan re-plant his field of wheat. Taran's demonstration of justice amounts to a subversion of hegemonic masculinity. Not only does Taran offer a non-violent solution to the dispute, but he has two members of the hegemony doing the work of a subordinated group. Smoit asks Taran if he will remain in cantrev Cadiffor and become his heir. Such an offer, however generous, does not satisfy Taran's need to know his parentage.

In "Alexander's Chronicles of Prydain: the Nature of Beginnings," Jon Stott agrees that the offer from Smoit, if generous, amounts to a distraction and even temptation for Taran, who is in the midst of learning to be a democratic rather than a traditional kind of hero. The adventure in Smoit's realm, according to Stott, helps Taran to exercise his sense of justice and presents him with a choice to continue his quest or not:

> The first stage of Taran's journey takes him through the territories of the boisterous but kindly King Smoit, where he meets two Lords, Goryon and Gast, whose petty quarrels reveal the abuses of power. From Smoit he learns about the relationship between leaders and followers – a king's strength lies in the will of those he rules. He refuses Smoit's offer to adopt him, realizing that, 'while Eilonwy might honour his rank, could she respect him for abandoning his quest even before it had begun? Could he respect himself?' (79). Although he helps Smoit by wisely reconciling Goryon and Gast, he realizes that his fulfilment cannot be easily achieved, and continues his lonely wanderings. (78)

Exercising justice is more akin to Mitchell's comment on Taran's noviciate than it does to May's and Kuznets's comments on Taran's Americanness. Stott holds to his description of Taran as a democratic hero moving through the symbolic landscape of the romance and does not confine Taran's development to that of the American hero.

Whether Taran is more an American than a democratic hero, his hesitation over becoming Smoit's heir suggests the degree to which he is still held by the conviction that his birth is the determining factor in how Eilonwy will receive his offer of marriage. If he is going to have aristocratic status, then he must achieve it by virtue of his own birth. Smoit's remonstrance that there is "'enough of me to make all of the kinsmen you could want" (*Taran* 84) isn't enough to make Taran abandon his quest. Taran is offered a kingship, but he cannot accept: "'Yet I would rather hold kingship by right of noble birth, not as a gift. It may be ...that in truth I am nobly born. If it should prove thus, then gladly would I rule Cadiffor'" (85). The old king is not fooled by Taran's illusion of birth, knowing full well the value of "'a wise Pig-Keeper on my throne over a blood prince who's a fool!" (85). But Taran insists on learning the truth about himself, and Smoit is respectful, if regretful, of Taran's choice.

Neither the old farmer nor the old king is able to convince Taran to abandon his quest. His respect for the former and fondness for the latter help to broaden his appreciation for such men, but neither manages to dissuade him from the search for the mirror. Each is only a part, a fragment of what Taran is seeking. The longing these two men have for a son is the same that Taran has for a father. But it is too early in Taran's quest for him to be deterred, and both men serve as structural signposts to tell us that Taran is indeed learning and proceeding forward on his adventure. How seriously Alexander expects us to take these encounters is unclear, but what is clear is that both meetings continue to lay the groundwork for Taran's ability to come to terms with his identity, as well as his place as war leader in *The High King*.

v. The Demonic Father

The encounter with Morda differs from the encounters with the other false fathers because it represents the inverse of Taran's meeting with Dallben at the beginning of the book. Morda is a demonic parody of Dallben, the black enchanter who threatens to transform Taran into a caged eagle, until Morda himself has to grovel for mercy in mortal terror of his own life. In terms of Alexander's cosmology, Morda resembles the Cauldron-Born because he has managed to escape death with the help of enchantment. He has cut off his own finger and magically placed his life into the "sliver of bone ...bleached white and highly polished" (*Taran* 94), which the companions find after the comical chase when the crow steals the key for Fflewddur's harp. The difference between Morda and the Cauldron-Born warriors, however, is that the Cauldron-Born are spell enslaved; they lack any will of their own and driven by the purposes of Arawn.

In the character of Morda, Taran meets the inverse of Dallben. Dallben, especially at the beginning of the series, appears almost comical, with his insistence on meditating, feet up and eyes closed for much of the day. Nonetheless, Dallben is the chief power that stands in opposition to Arawn. Morda, on the other hand, is evil. He is terrified of life and struggles to control it; his sole intent is to bring Prydain under a domination that will keep the land in a state of deathlessness, a state much like the desolation of the landscape that Frodo and Sam find on their approach to the Dark Gate of Mordor. Prydain will be a place for the creatures of death with no room for the living.

Two other points worth noting in regards to Morda are the depiction of his magic and the nature of his desire to rival Arawn. Like the villains of folktale, Morda has secured his power in an object, and the destruction of that object results in the destruction of Morda himself. Tolkien makes use of this same folktale motif in *The Lord of the Rings*, where the key to the Dark Lord's destruction lies in the destruction of the One Ring. As for Morda's desire to rival Arawn, he wants to impose his own deathlessness upon Prydain, and, as he says to Taran, become the master of the race of men. Morda is certainly not alone in his desire to rival the Lord of Death. Among Arawn's various rivals, Achren hates Arawn most passionately because she helped him to his throne, and he forced her out of her position of power. Morgant, Pryderi, and even Magg aspire to control Prydain, but Morda is most like Arawn in his enchanted state of deathlessness.

In relation to the Arthurian heroes, Morda's desire for power and immortality resembles the state of unlife to which Ged refers in *The Farthest Shore*. Cob, whom Ged and Arren finally track down on the white sand of the Isle of Selidor, last shore of Earthsea, moves freely between life and death and claims to hold the secret to immortality. But as Ged points out, he is not truly alive because he cannot die. Taran, like Ged and Arren, represents the life-giving force of the hero that overthrows death, seen in the characters of Cob and Morda. Death is also overthrown in *The Lord of the Rings*, where the destruction of the One Ring and the return of the king represent the end of the evil power of the Dark Lord and a restoration of the land with the reign of the new king.

In the confrontation with Morda, Taran faces a similar offer to that of King Smoit's. Just as every good villain who delights in revealing his cleverness to those he is about to destroy, Morda tells Taran that his power resides in an amulet he took from a woman who sought his help on a bleak night of winter many years before. As it happens, the woman is the mother of Eilonwy, and the amulet is the twin of that held by the Princess. In trying to discover the amulet's power, Morda is able not only to find and raid the treasure troves of the Fair Folk but also to transform the Fair Folk into harmless, crawling animals, as he does in turning Doli into a frog. In this way, Morda is the greatest threat encountered by the Fair Folk next to Arawn himself. As he contemplates turning Taran into a caged eagle, the enchanter discovers that he has no power over Taran because of the sliver of bone Taran has concealed in his jacket. In the struggle that follows, Taran manages to wrest the amulet from Morda, and then Morda himself must beg for his life.

In a demonic parody of the offers made by the old farmer and King Smoit, Morda first offers to share his power with Taran and then begs to serve him. But the wizard has no intention of serving Taran, and his grovelling is only because Taran holds the sliver of bone:

> Morda's hands clasped and unclasped. His fingers knotted around each other and he rocked back and forth at Taran's feet. His voice had taken on a wheedling, whining tone. "I will serve you, serve you well, Master Pig-Keeper. All my knowledge, all my powers at your bidding." Angharad's jewel dangled from its silver chain at Morda's wrist, and he clutched it and held it up before Taran. "This! Even this!" (130-31)

Taran is tempted by power, much like his temptation with Smoit, and the encounter tests Taran's determination to complete his quest. More importantly, with the breaking of the bone and the death of Morda, Taran considers using the amulet to bargain with Orwen for the knowledge he seeks, a choice which recalls the bargain he made with the brooch in *The Black Cauldron.* But Taran returns the amulet to Doli and the Fair Folk, receiving in turn the gratitude of the dwarf and the king of the Fair Folk. Just as Taran demonstrates his wisdom with respect to justice and mercy in the matter of cows, he makes a wise choice with respect to magic and its consequences for Prydain. Moreover, by his choice, Taran rejects the power of the darkened father and unknowingly gains another ally for the final book of the series.

vi. Meeting the Nemesis

Taran's last encounter before meeting Craddoc is with Dorath, the ruffian and mercenary, the antithesis of the false fathers Taran has encountered up to this point, save for Morda. Dorath stands alone in all of the chronicles; he is cunning and intelligent, uncaring and cruel, with the decisive qualities of a leader. He is the opposite of Taran in every way. Taran is searching for a clue to his parentage; Dorath is interested in nothing beyond himself. Taran is seeking his identity; Dorath knows exactly who he is in relation to his men. Taran serves a greater cause; Dorath serves himself. In every respect, Dorath is a soldier of fortune or dark warrior, as seen by his challenge to Taran regarding Taran's sword: "'My trade is to spill another's blood, not waste my own. And here the matter is easily settled. Pit one of your number against one of mine. A friendly wager, swineherd. Do you dare? The stakes? Your sword!'" (164). Taran accepts Dorath's wager, and he loses his sword.

As Taran moves toward the encounter with the father, Dorath steps in to literally and symbolically take away Taran's pretence of status and authority, and the result is that Taran is forced to encounter his father as himself and nothing else. Taran's sword, the blade of his adolescence, given to him by Dallben and girt on him by Eilonwy, is lost in a fight which serves only to humour Dorath's cruelty. Whatever manhood Taran has invested in the sword is lost. Such a loss is an illusion, but Taran's experience of the humiliation and shame in losing his sword to Dorath is real: "Even after his strength had come back and the pain in his side had dwindled to a dull ache, Taran sat a long while on the ground before gathering up his belongings - the torn cloak, the battle horn, the empty scabbard, and setting off to join Fflewddur and Gurgi. Dorath had gone. There was no sign of him, but the laughter still rang in Taran's ears" (166). The loss of the sword is Arthurian, recalling Arthur in Rosemary Sutcliff's *The Sword and the Circle* and the loss of the first sword he drew from the stone. The first sword is the ceremonial one, representing the recognition of Arthur's kingship in terms of the church and the barons of Britain. Arthur receives the second sword from the Lady of the Lake, and this second sword helps to unite Arthur's rule over all of the people of Britain. Taran, like Arthur, has more than one sword. His first sword he carries in his adolescent naiveté, until it is taken from him and he must make the move from boyhood to manhood. More than this, the scene reinforces the aggression, competition, and violence that both Michael Kimmel and Robert Connell say characterizes hegemonic masculinity.

vii. Finding the Father

The loss of the sword sets the stage for meeting Craddoc, a meeting that reintroduces the father and the wound in its most poignant form yet. Taran's experience of father is defined by the absence of the father and the presence of the wound. Because he rejects the false fathers along the way, Taran has clung to his hope of a birthright, but Dorath strips away the visible evidence of Taran's hope and his manhood in preparation for the meeting with the father.

Taran's main concern through to this point in his adventures is with finding his father, but he is not prepared for what he finds in the herdsman. He wants affirmation; he finds bitterness and grief. Taran experiences grief for the first time after winning the cauldron from the marshes, but he does not taste the bitter ashes of that grief until he meets Craddoc in the bleak hills in sight of the Llawgadarn mountains. With the news that he is son to the herdsman, all of Taran's dreams of noble birth end, and after Craddoc's death he becomes no man's son and journeys on to seek his fortune in the hills of the Commot folk.

Craddoc is the falsest of the false fathers Taran will meet on his adventure, a meeting predicated on the loss that Taran associates with the life of heroism and glory that has dominated his thinking for the first three books of the series. The meeting with Craddoc becomes almost Biblical in proportion. The companions happen upon a lamb, and Taran, given his already established kinship with the natural world, rescues it. The owner of the lost lamb is Craddoc. Later in his hut with the companions, Craddoc refers to the lamb that was lost but never found, that lost lamb being Taran himself. It is difficult to account for the nature of this scene between Taran and Craddoc, for nothing else Biblical appears in the five books. Nonetheless, Taran is the lost lamb who finds his way back to the fold and back to the father, and Taran isn't aware that Craddoc lies to him about this status as the lost son until just before Craddoc's death.

Regardless of the initial meeting between Taran and Craddoc, Taran's experience of meeting the father introduces him to shame in a new way. His shame at not knowing his parentage is redoubled as he understands that his father is a herdsman, who lives in a broken down house in the middle of hills that are both harsh and unforgiving. Even though Taran is determined to stay with Craddoc, he doesn't fully believe that the herdsman is his father. Fflewddur departs, leaving Taran and Gurgi to help the herdsman ready the cottage for winter, while Taran feels the hills close about him in the shame and despair of his new-found birthright.

Most of Alexander's critics examine the meeting with Craddoc, but none places this meeting into the context of a meeting with the father. Lois Kuznets comes closest when she says that Taran's development, especially in the fourth and fifth books, represents an adolescent rite of passage, in which obtaining the sword is symbolic of the renewal of the land. This treats the meeting with the father in symbolic terms, and even Campbell's atonement with the father is broadly archetypal rather than specifically masculine. Taran experiences the wound in the form of loss and shame in the meeting with Craddoc, and this experience of the wound is at the core of the initiation experience.

Taran eventually reconciles with the father, but that reconciliation is achieved only in light of Taran's shame. The days that follow Fflewddur's departure are characterized by the wound, and Taran receives the news that Craddoc is his father with despair and uncertainty. Having his sword stripped away and learning that he is the son of a herdsman reduce him to the lowest state he has experienced yet. This is Robert Bly's katabasis, the drop through the floor, the sudden loss of social status that introduces men to the world of grief and loss.

Taran's grandiose hopes for discovering his parentage are lost, and his decision to stay and work the farm with Craddoc is emblematic of his depressed state. He feels the weight of knowing his birthright and is determined not to accept that the herdsman is his father. Taran chooses to stay and work on the farm with Craddoc, but he experiences a descent. He is no longer the hopeful boy eager to join the likes of Prince Gwydion on a quest. He is marginalized by Prydain's aristocratic hegemony. He is the son of a herdsman, and he is ground down by the hard, physical labour of clearing the farm of boulders, of burning away brush, of the endless, back-breaking labour of working the neglected land.

Taran works from morning until night to help repair the cottage for the coming winter, and he develops a relationship with Craddoc. Ironically, Taran comes to respect the herdsman and the man's stubborn refusal to give in to the harshness of the landscape, but at the same time the herdsman himself is responsible for ending Taran's hopes: "Thus it was in the days that followed. When a sheep sickened, Craddoc cared for it with an unexpected tenderness that went to Taran's heart. Yet Craddoc it was who had torn asunder Taran's dream of noble birth and destroyed every hope he had cherished for Eilonwy" (185). Craddoc's hold over Taran is complete, and these "fetters of blood right" (185) keep Taran trapped. His feelings of entrapment are further emphasized by the mountains that make him feel as though he is in the cage that Morda promised him, no way out and no way to escape. Whereas Campbell's archetypal father bestows his blessings upon the hero, Taran is trapped by kinship and duty, and the only blessing the herdsman can give is to tell Taran the truth.

For Taran, experiencing the wound in the presence of the father finally leads to his release. Both Bly and Meade discuss this meeting with the father in terms of the meeting with the king, a symbolically realized variation of the father. After the young man's descent in "Iron John," he must come into the presence of the second king, where "the hunger for the father transmutes into the hunger for the king" (Bly 104). But this visit is short-lived. Bly points out that the boy has come from the ashes into the presence of the king, and in contrast to the boy, the king "has arrived at unity; he is undistorted, unmingled" (105), which suggests that the boy can approach the king only by degrees, and he will not be free of the ashes of shame and victimization all at once.

For Taran, this means he has already come into the presence of the second king, and each time he has returned to his own shame. All of the figures Taran has met show him a glimpse of the second king. Gwydion, Morgant, Rhuddlum, and even Smoit have been, to some degree, this second king for Taran. But Taran longs for, in his youthful naiveté, the meeting with that king in the form of his father. This is why the meeting with Craddoc is so emotionally charged. Taran is not simply expecting his father; he is expecting the king to bless him and bestow upon him his birthright.

In *Men and the Water of Life: Initiation and the Tempering of Men*, Michael Meade also discusses the meeting with the king, but he focuses specifically on the young man's wound as he enters the hut of the king in the second village. Meade explains that the king asks the boy why he has come, and the boy explains about the hunt with his father, the rat, and the blow that followed. He stresses the importance of the question and its answer, for the boy can remain in the presence of the king only if he acknowledges where he has come from, which for Meade means a place of woundedness: "The son can only be the son of a king if he knows in what ways he is wounded. Ultimately, denying his woundedness will deny him access to the king in himself" (37). In this way, the wound and the father and the king become inextricably bound together. Taran experiences all three at once, and the long anticipated meeting with his father who is actually a herdsman fuels Taran's shame and destroys his hopes of marrying the princess.

The truth about Taran's relationship to the herdsman emerges when Craddoc is lying injured at the bottom of a steep, rocky slope in a snow storm. Standing at the top of the cliff, Taran is torn with a momentary indecision as to whether or not he should risk his and Gurgi's lives in rescuing Craddoc, realizing with shame and horror that the death of the herdsman would mean freedom for himself: "Free of his burden, free of the valley, the door of his cage open wide, and all his life awaited him" (*Taran* 192). When Craddoc admits the lie he has told in claiming that Taran is his son, the herdsman's shame is equal to Taran's own in believing that the man was his father. The three are rescued by the Fair Folk, but the herdsman does not survive. After a long illness, Taran is able to forgive

Craddoc's lie. Taran's struggle at the top of the cliff becomes another of his moral tests in preparation for kingship.

For Taran, the reconciliation between father and son becomes one between equals. Craddoc proves to be the falsest of the false fathers, and what remains is a succession of father fragments, culminating in a lie. In spite of what Taran thinks to be true, he still lacks a flesh and blood father, but that lack no longer holds the kind of power it once did. He is content to be nameless: Taran Wanderer, no man's son, with no birthright and no hope for betterment.

Alexander suggests a level of independence as part of the initiatory process. Taran's namelessness at the end of the adventure reinforces the nature of the father as absence rather than initiating priest, as lack rather than reconciliation. Nonetheless, Alexander's model of initiation places this meeting with the father at a key point in Taran's development. The fragmentation of the father and the series of false fathers Taran encounters before he is brought to the lowest state he has known set him apart. In the end, Taran forges his shame into a new identity, even if that identity is to be nameless. The presence or absence of the flesh and blood father pales in comparison to the need to overcome the emotional wound of not knowing his parents, and it is this wound that keeps Taran in bondage until he can use it to set himself free.

viii. Completing the Quest

Leaving the bleak hills marks the final stage in Taran's quest, and he journeys on as *Taran Wanderer*, bearing no name and no longer seeking the answer to his question. The Free Commots, whose land Taran and Gurgi find themselves in, are best described by Doli after the adventure with Morda: "'You'll not find many in Prydain to match their stout hearts and good will, and no man lords it over his fellows because he had the luck to be born in a king's castle instead of a farmer's hut. What matters in the ~~Free Commots is~~ the skill in a man's hands not the blood in his veins'" (*Taran* 144). Taran meets a succession of craftsmen, each of whom is able to show Taran something of his or her skill. From Hevydd, Taran learns how to make a sword; from Dwyvach, how to weave a cloak; from Annlaw, how to shape clay. At the end of each encounter, the craftsman offers to take Taran on as an apprentice, but in each case he chooses to carry on, recalling the earlier meetings with the false fathers. Taran finds he wants to stay with Annlaw, who becomes the last of the father figures, but even here Taran finds that he is denied his desire.

The people of the Free Commots recall Michael Kimmel's characterization of the heroic artisan in *Manhood in America: A Cultural History*. The craftsmen of the Commots stand apart from the aristocratic hegemony of Prydain and represent Alexander's romanticized depiction of the artisans of early America. What makes them different as a group is that they are not ruled by chieftain or petty king; they owe allegiance to the House of Don. Taran earns their respect and their loyalty, and when he returns in the fifth book to rally the folk of the Commots in the assault against Arawn, his authority as war leader comes from Gwydion and the Commot folk themselves.

The end of Taran's quest brings him to the mirror of Llunet, where he finally learns what the mirror will reveal. The mirror is fabled to show the true nature of the beholder, and Taran makes the journey to the mirror in order to see what he might see. In true Alexander style, what Taran sees lacks magic of any kind. Taran is shown what he already is: a man. The mirror is an exquisite pool, settled in a hollow at the head of the lake, and the moment in which Taran looks into the mirror is that moment in which he sees himself for the first time. Or does he? I have to credit Jon Stott with the suggestion that Taran sees himself, but he also sees the face of Dorath over his shoulder. The ruffian is behind him, and Taran, seeing his own reflection in the mirror, may for an instant see the face of Dorath reflected as well.

Taran's manhood is confirmed in the fight with Dorath at the end of the book. The sword motif reveals itself once again, for Taran is beaten to his knees by his own sword, given to him by Dallben, as Dorath uses it to try to kill him. The sword of his adolescence shatters upon the rough made sword of his new manhood, and Dorath flees Taran, leaving him shaken and disillusioned. Taran sees himself in the pool, the evidence of his manhood etched into his face, which he later reports to Annlaw when he returns to the house of the Clay-shaper:

> "In the time I watched, I saw strength - and frailty. pride and vanity, courage and fear. Of wisdom, a little. Of folly, much. Of intentions, many good ones; but

> many more left undone. In this, alas, I saw myself a man like any other. But this too I saw, ... Alike as men may seem, each is different as flakes of snow, no two the same. You told me you had no need to seek the Mirror, knowing you were Annlaw Clay-Shaper. Now, I know who I am: myself and none other. I am Taran." (270)

In the pool, Taran sees the blend of virtues and failings that constitute manhood. His recognition may seem little more than pocket philosophy, but the anguish Taran experiences during his quest goes a long way to prepare him for what is to come in the final book of the series. And in that moment of recognition, with the autumn beginning to gather about them, Taran and Gurgi turn for home.

Taran's encounter with the father and the recognition of himself in the pool marks the end of this middle stage of Taran's initiation. Men and the public sphere, heroes and heroism, the encounter with the feminine, and the meeting with the father represent the core of Taran's initiation. The meeting with Craddoc allows Taran, once and for all, to let go of his illusions of grandeur and understand that birth does not equal worth, at the same time granting him a measure of authority that is not complicit with Prydain's aristocratic hegemony. This understanding is reinforced by the people of the Free Commots, but the real testing ground for Taran is his despair and isolation in the company of his father. Even though Taran's encounter with his father is not quite that of the archetypal hero, neither does it entirely reflect that of the mythopoetic model. Taran is an Arthurian hero being prepared for kingship. He is also the democratic hero as identified by Alexander's critics, but his label as an American hero of fantasy is too narrow a definition to account for the complex nature of his coming of age. Pinning down the nature of Taran's development amidst these critics, we could say that he most resembles the Campbellian hero, insofar as he is more like the poor farmer's son of folktale who marries the princess. Since this is a common motif among European folktales, it can hardly be said to be an American trait. More than this, however, is the fact that Taran's quest puts him in relation to men and issues of manhood. His development is that of the folktale hero, but it is individualized in terms of men and masculinities, which helps to illuminate Taran's development throughout the fourth of the chronicles. With the end of *Taran Wanderer*, Taran has come to the end of his road of trials. In the final book of the series, Taran is ready to assert himself as a leader, and bring together the people of Prydain under the banner of the white pig in the final assault against Arawn.

Chapter 7

Restoration and Kingship

The final book in Alexander's series marks the end of Taran's initiation and his ascension to kingship. From this position, he will be able to alter the nature of Prydain's aristocratic hegemony and restore the land of Prydain following the defeat of Arawn Death-Lord. *The High King* is broader in scope than the preceding books, and it ties together the loose threads from the first four of the chronicles. From a narrative standpoint, the book is unusual: where *The Book of Three*, *The Black Cauldron*, *The Castle of Llyr*, and *Taran Wanderer* fix the narrative with Taran himself, *The High King* employs a mobile narrative focus which accounts for a number of other characters and events introduced in the earlier books. In this way, *The High King* brings closure to the series, marking the end of the initiatory process for Taran and identifying him as an Arthurian hero through his claim to the black sword and his role as war leader. More importantly, he gains the authority to shift the centre of power in Prydain and reshape the nature of the hegemony to serve a wider community.

In Arthurian terms, Taran comes to kingship when he finds Dyrnwyn, the black sword, at the top of Mount Dragon during the assault on Annuvin, the Land of Death. Taran's claim to the kingship is evident in his ability to draw the black sword and use it to kill Arawn who has taken the form of a giant serpent. Moreover, Taran's choice to remain in Prydain, and not sail across the sea to the Summer Country, fulfills the prophecy from *The Book of Three* as to who will assume the burden of rule in Prydain. But before Taran can assume that burden, he must prove himself once again. The assumption of leadership, the re-introduction of the wound, the discovery of the sword, and the slaying of the monster are all a prelude to the ascension to kingship and the marriage to the princess, and with this ascension comes the establishment of order and the renewal of the land. Taran's ascension to kingship appropriately ends his initiation and reflects both the mythopoetic and archetypal models, ending the initiatory process in a manner symbolic of union, centeredness, and reconciliation. With this ascension to kingship, Taran has the opportunity to reconstruct and redirect the social structure of

Prydain. The initiatory models most applicable here are the archetypal and the mythopoetic. The ritualistic, with its focus on the initiation of boys within so-called traditional cultures, does not mention kingship directly, but it does refer to the way in which boys become full-fledged members of the community following their initiations. Similarly, Campbell's archetypal model refers only indirectly to kingship, but the hero's return, the third stage in Campbell's monomyth, focuses on the restoration of the landscape and the boon that restores the community. From the mythopoetic perspective, kingship is central to the initiation process. Bly and Moore and Gillette discuss the metaphor of kingship at length, examining the ways in which it follows upon the initiate's experience of the father and how it becomes emblematic of the integration of the male psyche. Taken together, these models inform Taran's ascension to kingship and help to explain the end of the initiatory process. Taran, however, recognizes his responsibility to the land of Prydain and its people. Moreover, Taran's position as a non-traditional hero speaks to the dismantling of the patriarchal mode of kingship, and thus the end of the series posits a new social vision that undercuts domination, subordination, and violence in favour of community, equality, and peace.

i. The Death of the King

The final stage in Taran's initiation can be read in an archetypal and mythopoetic context, informed by the ancient motif of the dead or dying king. This motif embodies an ancient ritual and appears in myths and folktales from around the world, but it has implications for both Alexander's series and the initiatory models under discussion. As a prelude to discussing Taran's coming to kingship, I would first like to take up the motif of the dying king as it comes down through myth and folktale and to examine how this ancient, symbolic figure informs the initiatory process and heroic fantasy.

The precursor to the dying king is the dying god of mythology. In *From Ritual to Romance*, Jessie Weston explains the nature of the dying god in mythology and ancient ritual practice, and how this figure becomes the dying king of folktale and romance. In many myths and folktales, kingship marks the end of the hero's quest, but the dead or dying king can also serve as the catalyst for further events as seen in the Grimms' tale "The Water of Life." The dying king often represents a dead or dying landscape ripe for a redeemer, or, as Campbell puts it, the "culture bringer," who will restore the community and heal the land.

In Celtic mythology, the figure of the dying king is the fisher king, wounded through the thighs, whose impending death is symbolic of a corrupted and dying landscape. One of the earliest literary variations on the fisher-king myth appears in "Branwen Daughter of Llyr," the second branch of the Mabinogi, the first four loosely connected legends in *The Mabinogion*. In this tale, Bran, king of the Isle of Britain, leads a host across the sea to Ireland to rescue his sister Branwen from the mistreatment at the hands of her husband, the Irish king. Bran dies from a wound in the foot caused by a poisoned dart, and his head is brought back to Britain by his retainers. A Christianized variation on the dying-king figure appears in Mallory's *The Morte d'Arthur*. The young Percival beholds the ancient King Evelake in a monastery, who lies wounded until he can be touched by the knight worthy of finding the holy grail. Mallory's worthy knight reflects the heroic quest of such characters as Taran and Arren.

The death of the king has been acted out by various cultures around the world, representing a graphic enactment of a cycle of death and rebirth. In *The Golden Bough*, James Frazer describes in detail the practice of regicide that existed among many "traditional" cultures, and ties the figure of the king to religious rites of various cultural groups. The king of the wood who guards the holy place, and who stands ready to defend himself to the death, holds his title for as long as he stays alive. But wrapped up in this ritual of death and renewal is the well being of the community:

> In both we see a series of divine kings on whose life the fertility of man, of cattle, and of vegetation is believed to depend, and who are put to death, whether in single combat or otherwise, in order that their divine spirit may be transmitted to their successors in full vigour, uncontaminated by the weakness and decay of sickness or old age, because any such degeneration on the part of the king would, in the opinion of his worshippers, entail a corresponding degeneration on mankind, on cattle, and on the crop. (355)

This connection between the king of the wood and the fertility of the land, and by extension its people, suggests the importance of the figure of the king as religious symbol rather than political power. The health and well-being of the king, as long as he is alive, has a direct correlation to the health of the land and the community. Such "sympathetic magic," according to Frazer, shows the king as a living, religious symbol, standing in contrast to the dying king of folktale. The pervasive nature of this archetype in myth and literature suggests its symbolic importance as a cycle of death and renewal, but it has similar implications for both the archetypal and mythopoetic models of initiation.

For Kuznets and Hourihan, kingship is both the embodiment and assertion of western patriarchal ideologies, and the bloody end to the quest of the traditional hero. Kuznets identifies the phallic sword as being at the centre of the Arthurian development novel, but what Hourihan calls "traditional patriarchal ideologies" Bly terms "industrial domination." The difference is that Hourihan places patriarchal masculine values in the context of the hero's desire to conquer and destroy, whereas Bly places patriarchy alongside matriarchy as equally valuable and interdependent mythical structures. Bly describes the absence of both the king and queen archetypes in the twentieth century as amounting to a mode of "industrial domination," in which the disappearance of both the sacred and political king manifests in the general weakening of the contemporary father. In mythopoetic terms, the movement toward the king archetype becomes a movement toward the integration of the masculine.

To broaden his explanation of the nature of kingship, Bly takes an historical approach to the figure of the king by identifying several levels of kingship: the upper, sacred king; the middle, political king; and the inner, metaphorical king. The sacred king is the mythological king, whom Bly identifies in terms of a distinct mythological layer: "To think mythologically means to have the ability to imagine these 'gods' and what they do, boisterously, vigorously, and well, while keeping the human layer and their layer well distinguished from each other" (107). As Bly points out, the confusion in reading fairy tales for most contemporary readers is seeing the sacred king and the political king as one and the same. The archetype may not inform social interaction and social practice according to Kimmel and Connell, but it does inform the final stage of Taran's initiation.

In mythopoetic terms, order and blessing are the main qualities of the sacred king. The earthly king, according to Bly, first appeared in the city states of Mesopotamia during the second millennium B.C.E., and the king's purpose was to unite the sacred and the political. However, the sacred king has a dark side that stands in opposition to those generative qualities that Bly identifies in *Iron John*. The sacred king encourages creativity, establishes order, and provides blessing, whereas the "poison" king moves to kill creativity and bring ruin. These two streams, according to Bly, come down from the king, and the same double stream also applies to the father. According to Bly, the inner king is metaphorically that state men can honour by remembering "tiny desires" (112), but the real work begins by grieving over the dead king and his dead warriors. Thus, the image of the dead king surrounded by his dead warriors is a further metaphor of what happens when a man fails to honour the king.

Such discussion of the king archetype is nevertheless problematic in the broader application to men's lived experience. The question here, just as it is for the figure of the Wild Man, is with balancing the danger of literalizing the archetype on the one hand with its usefulness in terms of social practice on the other. In his response to the mythopoetic men's movement, Michael Kimmel describes the limitations of the movement because of its essentialist approaches to gender and gender relations. He states that such essentialist thinking reduces masculinity to something that is more biological than cultural, and it does not allow for the recognition of multiple masculinities in a social context. Much of what Bly contends may apply only to white, middle class masculinities, but he does make the attempt to draw from a range of cultural and religious sources to make his point about the initiatory process.

The king archetype is useful as a means of examining the heroic quest in literary fantasy, a genre that until the twentieth century has been largely white and male and descended from the tradition of the English and French romance. The image of the dead or absent king, in particular, is graphically realized for Taran and the other Arthurian heroes. As Arren and Ged make their way by boat across Earthsea, and as they observe the weakening of rule and magic, the burning of fields and villages, and the despair of the islanders, Ged comments that the people of the Archipelago lack a king. No king has sat on the throne of Earthsea for seven hundred years, and the wreck and ruin caused by Cob, the "anti-king" and the "un-maker," is a result of this lack of a centre. Prydain, on the other hand, has a high king, but the metaphor of the dead king is no less potent for Taran in his own rise to kingship, and is a concrete figure for Taran from the beginning of the series. In *The Book of Three*, when Eilonwy leads Taran out of Spiral Castle through the passage ways under the floor, they happen on a chamber deep under the ground. In the centre of the chamber lies a dead king, and surrounding him on the floor are his dead warriors. Ironically, the hands of the dead king hold the black sword, the one that Taran will use to kill Arawn. The placement of the dead king so early in the series suggests the primacy of the figure and the place from which Taran begins his own process of initiation. Thus, metaphorically speaking, and ironically, this dead king holds the means to Taran's recognition as king in the final book of the series.

The death of the king is most graphically realized in Tolkien's *The Return of the King* and the fifth book of Alexander's series. It serves a dual purpose: loss and woundedness followed by restoration. Both Theoden, king of Rohan, and Denethor, steward of Gondor, die during the battle of the Pelennor Fields, the assault on the city of Minas Tirith. Theoden falls in battle against the Lord of the Nazgul, and Denethor burns himself alive in despair at beholding the power of the Dark Lord set against him. These deaths represent opposite poles of kingship: Theoden's as death in battle with honour and glory while Denethor's as death in madness and despair.

Theoden rides in battle against the men of Harad, and he hews down the banner of the black serpent and slays their chieftain. Such a scene re-enacts in miniature the hero's slaying of the monster; conversely, Denethor's suicide recalls what Bly says about the poison king and darkened father. Denethor commands that his son Faramir, still burning with fever from the dart of the Nazgul, be carried to the Hallows, the domed chamber at the end of the silent street where the dead stewards of Gondor are laid to rest. The Hallows is a holy place, but Denethor defiles the holy ground by commanding that a pier be built to burn him and his son alive. Faramir is saved only by the intervention of first Pippin and then Gandalf. This is indeed the poison king and darkened father. Denethor is not simply the dying king of myth; he despairs of life and intends, in his madness, to murder his own son.

The figure of the dying king manifests itself in the *Prydain* chronicles through the deaths of three kings in the final book of the series, the book which brings all of the companions together again at Caer Dallben. Returning from the Western Commots, Taran and Gurgi are alerted by Kaw, Taran's faithful crow, that Eilonwy has returned from Mona, and the two companions ride hard until they reach the farm. Prince Rhun reappears as the King of Mona, having escorted the princess Eilonwy back to Caer Dallben. Dallben and Coll stand by as Taran and the princess greet one another, while Achren, the once powerful enchantress, crouches by the fire, having taken refuge at Caer Dallben. In the midst of this reunion, Fflewddur enters, carrying a wounded and unconscious Gwydion, and the scene sets the stage for the final assault against Arawn. This final assault is motivated by Arawn's theft of the black sword. He has come forth from Annuvin and taken the shape of Taran to lure Gwydion into a battle with a group of huntsmen. The sword is taken, and Gwydion is determined to retrieve it. Before starting on their quest, Dallben asks Hen Wen to make a prophecy using the letter sticks: "Quenched will be Dyrnwyn's flame;/ Vanished, its power./ Night turn to noon/ And rivers burn with frozen fire/ Ere Dyrnwyn be regained" (*King* 41). Thus runs the prophecy that determines how and when the black sword will be recovered. Such a prophecy also recalls the traditional hero whose rise to kingship is divinely inspired or at the least foretold.

The deaths of Rhun and Math are symbolic of the destruction of Prydain, but they also set the stage for Taran's rise to kingship. Rhun falls in fighting to re-take King Smoit's stronghold from Magg and his warriors, while Math falls in defence of his city against the cauldron warriors. Rhun's death seems gratuitous, but it puts Taran in the position of pledging to finish those tasks Rhun set for himself on Mona, such as completing the seawall in Mona haven. The death of the young king falls into more a realistic than an archetypal mode, which speaks to Alexander's method of informing his fantasy with his realistic experience of war. The young king sits propped up with the broken shaft of an arrow in his side:

> "Amazing!" Rhun whispered. "I've never been in battle before, and I wasn't sure of – of anything at all. But, I say, the oddest things kept running through my head. I was thinking of the seawall at Mona Haven. Isn't it surprising? . . ." His eyes

> wandered, and suddenly he looked very young, very lost, and a little frightened.
>
> "And I think – I think I shall be glad to be home." (*King* 99)

Taran is grief stricken at the death of Rhun, but he determines to complete the task of building the seawall on the young king's behalf.

The death of the High King is different from that of Rhun's and sets the Sons of Don against the demonic warriors of the black cauldron. The warriors, once in service to the High King, turn against Math and destroy the city:

> Before them [the cauldron warriors] stood Math the High King. He was attired in the raiment of the Royal House, belted with links of gold, and on his brow glittered the Gold Crown of Don. ... Outstretched, his withered hand gripped a naked sword. The deathless warriors of Annuvin halted, as if at the faint stirring of some clouded memory. The moment passed, and they strode on. ... The High King did not turn away as the Cauldron-Born drew closer, his eyes fixed theirs as he raised his sword defiantly. Unflinching, he stood in pride and ancient majesty. The first of the pallid warriors was upon him. Grasping the flashing sword in his frail hands, the High King swung it downward in a sweeping blow. The warrior's blade turned it aside, and the Cauldron-Born struck heavily. King Math staggered and dropped to one knee. (159)

Math falls before the gates of Caer Dathyl, and Taran turns away in grief. With the death of Math, another of the strongholds of Prydain falls before the power of Arawn. The cauldron warriors that "had journeyed as though from the grave, their task only to bring death, unpitying, implacable as their own lifeless faces" (158), are the inverse of such characters as Gwydion or Math, and suggest a demonic parody of heroism in a similar fashion to that of the Horned King from the first book in the series.

Although Alexander characterizes the rule of the House of Don as benevolent, it nevertheless represents the centre of hegemonic control in Prydain. The Princes of Don came from the Summer Country to rule Prydain and bring prosperity, but this benevolence becomes a hierarchical social structure that is threatened by Arawn Death-Lord. Those petty chieftains and cantrev lords who are subordinate to the rule of the House of Don do not act out of the same sense of benevolence. They are characterized by aggression, violence, and competition; even the kindly King Smoit is complicit in the use of force and domination. Reading an all-ages fantasy in such terms is problematic, but institutionalized violence and competition are nonetheless characteristic of the form.

The deaths of Rhun and Math are similar to Theoden's in Tolkien, but the death of Pryderi forms a parallel to that of Denethor. Like Morgant in the second of the chronicles who seeks to rule Prydain by raising his own army of cauldron warriors, Pryderi comes to kill Dallben and take the Book of Three with the intent of overthrowing Arawn. Pryderi, with his golden hair, his scarlet robe, and his retinue of banners and hooded hawks, is a striking and flamboyant contrast to the dark figure of Morgant from the second chronicle. He is, however, no less a servant of evil. He is the dark king and dark warrior, set against King Math, wanting to rule Prydain in the place of Arawn.

Tyrants like Morgant and Pryderi acquire a more sinister cast when seen in the light of Taran's democratization. It gives kingship a political edge that it does not have in other fantasies. Despots like Morgant and Pryderi, and even Arawn himself, are doubly evil in the light of their desire to dominate such characters as the folk of the Free Commots. The tension between tyranny and democracy creates a special problem for Alexander in terms of kingship: how then is he going to bring Taran to kingship without undercutting his own attempt to Americanize Taran's development? He manages it, but only by remaining noncommittal through to the end of the series.

ii. The Assumption of Leadership

Through the deaths of these kings, Alexander introduces the wasted nature of the land in preparation for Taran's ascension to kingship; moreover, the deaths of Rhun and Math recall Bly's discussion of the death of the king in *Iron John* and the need to reclaim the king as the final stage in the mythopoetic process of initiation. In both Alexander and the mythopoetic model, leadership emerges with the recognition of the dead or dying king. Leadership is that which enables the initiate to move beyond the limits of his own identity to serve what Bly calls a "transcendent cause" and to move into the service of the true king. This quality figures into both Taran's initiation and the mythopoetic model. Moreover, it is the active continuation of what the young man in "Iron John" began while shovelling ashes for the king and later working in the garden. But meeting precedes service, and, like Taran, the young man in the story must come into the presence of the king before he can begin to serve that transcendent will.

The meeting with the king occurs between ashes work and moving into the garden. Bly explains how the boy approaches the king upon the cook's request, and the king is outraged that the young man will not remove his head covering when coming into his presence. The young man's reluctance to have the king see his golden hair recalls a similar reluctance at the sacred spring when he fails to guard the water. But the young man is drawn almost irresistibly into the presence of the king, and, according to Bly, the father wound and the hunger for the father transmute into the hunger for the king.

In the story, word comes to the young man in the garden that the king is at war. At this point, he turns once again to the Wild Man. He leaves the castle and rides a lame horse to the edge of the forest where he calls Iron John's name three times. The Wild Man brings him a great war horse to take the place of his hobblety-hoy, and he gives the young man a band of armoured warriors to accompany him to the battlefield. Bly draws attention to the fact that the young man is now leading a host into battle, but also that the Wild Man has provided him with a horse appropriate to his ability. As sexual symbol, the horse suggests an assertion of gender that was missing when the young man encountered the princess, and the maturity that comes with this stage allows the young man to lead a host to the battlefield. He and his iron warriors arrive in time to turn the battle; the enemy is routed; the king wins the day. Just as the young man is reluctant for the king to see his golden hair, he says nothing about his part in the battle, after which he returns the horse and warriors to Iron John, and rides his lame horse back to the castle.

Although Bly speaks of his initiate's learning leadership and service to a transcendent cause, the king in the "Iron John" story is no less the centre of hegemonic power than are the Sons of Don in Prydain. The king in the story represents authority, and the young man is complicit with that authority. His decision to go to the forest and ask the Wild Man for help results in his using institutionalized violence - the band of armed men - to defeat the enemy and maintain the king's position of control. It is common enough for power and violence to be masculinized in folktales, some obvious exceptions being such figures as the wicked witch or the wicked queen. Nonetheless, the young man in the story is serving the king, the hegemonic centre, because he wants to be authorized by that power. Bly does refer to the poison king, but whether poison or benign, the king invariably represents hegemonic masculinity, with other forms of masculinity and women subordinate to that authority.

In spite of being connected to hegemonic masculinity, kingship carries with it other qualities apparent in both Tolkien and Alexander. When Aragorn comes by ship to the besieged city of Minas Tirith, he reveals the standard of the ancient kings of Gondor, but after the battle is won, he retreats to his camp outside the city, not wishing to cause dissension among its people. Similarly, Taran discovers patience and judgement in the final book in the series, but they come in the form of serving Gwydion, the new High King, and returning to, as Jon Stott says, his own beginnings as he assumes his position as war leader.

Taran's first task after the death of Rhun is to raise a war host in the western Commots, and here he exhibits his ability to lead while undercutting the aristocratic hegemony of Prydain. Taran uses the embroidery of Hen Wen made by Eilonwy as a standard, and he rallies his host around the banner of the white pig. His role as Gwydion's war leader is one Taran could not have assumed earlier in the series because his obsessive concern over his parentage prevents him from adopting the role of leader until the final book. Following the assault on Caer Dathyl and the destruction of the city, Gwydion gives Taran command of a war band and his task is to prevent the cauldron warriors from reaching the Land of Death before Gwydion and his own host can reach Annuvin by way of the sea. The battle plan is for one final assault against Arawn in hopes of recovering the black sword and ending the power of Arawn forever.

The High King has a connection to the second book in the series, recalling a youthful Taran who is given his first chance to serve with the warriors. His task to remain behind and guard the pack animals with Ellidyr and Adaon lacks the glory for which he had hoped, but it serves no less of a function than the group that enters Dark Gate to wrest the cauldron from Arawn. In *The High King*, Taran's task first takes him away from the Land of Death, but again his role is no less significant than Gwydion's. Taran is in command of a war host, and it is his task to stop the cauldron warriors from returning to Annuvin.

The loyalty that Taran commands from the people of the Commots, the recognition of his own boyhood, and his reliance on the first of his mentors characterize him as a leader and reveal him to be a subversive force in relation to the aristocratic hegemony. The loyalty of the Commot folk emerges out of the friendship that he establishes during his first sojourn among the people of the Commots. Llassar, one of the Commot men, tells Taran that his people are herdsmen and husbandmen, not warriors: "'Our pride is not in fighting but in farming; in the work of our hands, not our blades. Never have we sought war. We come now to the banner of the White Pig because it is the banner of our friend, Taran Wanderer'" (122). This stands as a contrast to Bly's discussion of kingship in that Taran is granted the authority to lead by the very men he commands, and it also serves to emphasize the democratic nature of the series. The irony is that Taran will become king, but the loyalty he wins for himself among the western Commots is based on equality rather than service, and further undercuts the social structure of Prydain. In the words of Hevydd, the smith who helped Taran forge his own sword, the "'folk of the Free Commots honour King Math and the House of Don .... but they will answer only to one they know as a friend, and follow him not in obligation but in friendship'" (115). Nonetheless, Taran himself serves Gwydion, who at this point is the High King of Prydain, and in this way Taran receives his authority from both the aristocratic hegemony and those groups who are subordinate to it. The Commot men are, as Kuznets says, Taran's populist support, and they are the citizen/soldiers whom Taran brings to war.

Taran relies on Coll, the old turnip farmer, as he rallies his war host, which suggests that he is also learning the interdependence that comes with leadership. Coll is the first of Taran's mentors, the farmer turned warrior, the "'oaken staff I lean on'" (123). He repeatedly turns to Coll for council and recognizes the value of his men for what they are, finally seeing warriorhood as necessity, not vocation. Moreover, many of Alexander's critics identify Taran's understanding of the nature of the warrior as his Americanness. As Kuznets explains, the Commot folk are Taran's populist support, those citizen/soldiers who will rise to the occasion of battle out of necessity, and follow Taran out of loyalty founded on friendship and equality. Such loyalty puts a particular spin on kingship for Alexander. It is a particular democratized rendering of service that sets Taran apart as a hero of fantasy, and further identifies him as a non-traditional hero and Alexander as an American writing within a largely British form.

iii. Reintroducing the Wound

In spite of the democratic approach to leadership and service in Alexander, Taran's development at this point closely follows that of the ritualistic and mythopoetic models. Taran's assumption of leadership is followed by the re-introduction of the wound, and as a central aspect of male initiation, wounding and woundedness has its place in kingship, just as it does in the initial separation from the mother, and later in the encounter with the father. This wound marks the maturity of the initiate and in some respects the end of the initiatory experience.

The second wound is evident in the festival of the apples in *Iron John*, when the king sends his knights in pursuit of the young man wearing the black armour. The black armour, as Bly says, is emblematic of compassion and leadership, as opposed to the white of resolve and the red of passion. The young man receives a sword wound in the leg, and his helmet falls off as he rides away, revealing his golden hair.

According to Bly, this wound in the leg comes late in the initiation process and stands as a parallel to the initial wounding of severance. This second wound gives the initiate what Bly calls the "second heart," which allows him to recognize maturity and inscribes the male body with that maturity. The second wound heralds the contemporary man's commitment to the "god of grief" and is the evidence written on the male body that enables him to relate compassionately to the world:

> Moreover, the leg wound that the King's men gave has created, according to the fantasy human beings have carried for centuries, a womb inside the male body. No one gets to adulthood without a wound that goes to the core. And the boy in our story does not become King without that wound. The old tradition says that women have two hearts: one heart in their chest and another heart in their womb. They are double-hearted. The old initiators then make the young man, through the wound given in ritual space, double-hearted. Now the man has the physical heart

he has always had, but also a compassionate heart. He has a double heart. (219) Taran does not receive a physical wound in this way, but the emotional wounds he carries give him such a double heart, most strongly suggested by his experience of grief in the fifth book. Taran must come to terms with the deaths of two of his mentors, Annlaw, the old Clay-shaper, and Coll, the old turnip farmer. This grief recalls Taran's grief in the second chronicle when he gives up the brooch to the hags in Morva, but Taran's grief over the brooch was for himself, while here he mourns the deaths of two father figures. Because these men have been both mentor and father to Taran, he feels the loss more keenly, and both deaths help to bind him to the land of Prydain in a way that makes it impossible for him to leave for the Summer Country at the end of the adventure.

The death of Annlaw Clay-Shaper introduces Taran to more than just the wounds he has carried throughout the series. Taran has been put and has put himself in the position of war leader, and as such he is responsible for those who follow him. As Taran rallies the men of the Commots to go to war, Dorath and his band of marauders appear once again. The fight with Dorath's band of ruffians is Taran's first victory, but when he returns to Merin, he finds the Commot "has been put to the torch, and its folk to the sword" (128). As Llassar says upon seeing Taran's grief, "'It is harsh enough for each man to bear his own wound. But he who leads bears the wounds of all who follow him'" (129). As Gwydion's war leader, Taran assumes responsibility for his men. Because Taran is learning about the nature of compassion, he is able to bear the wounds of those who follow him and grieve for those who die under his command.

The death of Coll in the Red Fallows marks a personal loss that Taran has not yet had to endure in the series. Coll dies as Taran's war band is attempting to turn the cauldron warriors from marching across the Red Fallows, the wasted land that borders the mountains. Taran himself hollows out a grave for the old farmer, and he stays alone by the grave while the band moves into the hills: "He halted another moment by the mound of red earth and rough stones. 'Sleep well, grower of turnips and gatherer of apples,' Taran murmured. 'You are far from where you longed to be. So, too, am I'" (178). Taran's ability to grieve for Rhun, for Math, for Annlaw, and for Coll shows his double heart, and his recognition of Coll for what he is suggests his mature understanding of his own place and those who follow him.

iv. The Sword and the Monster

Taran's task in the fifth book is to prevent the Cauldron-Born from reaching Annuvin, but his task leads him instead to the recovery of Dyrnwyn, the black sword. The sword is the single unifying motif throughout the five books: Taran's fencing with pokers in *The Book of Three*, receiving his first sword from Dallben in *The Black Cauldron*, losing that sword to Dorath in *Taran Wanderer*, and forging a new sword at the forge of Hevydd, the smith, all show the consistent nature of this motif. Just as Arthur must draw the sword from the stone, Taran must find the sword before he can ascend the throne, and even as a non-traditional hero, finding the sword is necessary in this final stage of his initiation.

In traditional terms, the sword is the weapon of the hero, a weapon of violence in the hand of the civilizing force of the hero. Lois Kuznets refers to the central place of the sword in her discussion of the Arthurian development novel as phallic and representing male power and male control. Hourihan also comments on the excessive violence characteristic of the traditional hero tale, so often centering on the hero and his sword, and identifying the hero as a man of action and violence:

> The hero is a man of action and it is in action that he expresses his nature – skill, courage, dominance and determination. He is neither contemplative nor creative. He marches onward, and when he encounters a dragon or a difficulty he deals with it. In some versions of the story it is action itself, as much as the final goal, which is the point of the quest. Action involving an extreme level of skill or great danger is depicted as providing extraordinary fulfilment akin to that of a mystical experience. (95)

Taran, however, is not the man of action that Hourihan describes. He is not like Dorath, the mercenary leader of the fourth chronicle; with each successive book, he places less value on the task itself than on the characters he meets.

What then is the function of the sword for the non-traditional hero? In mythopoetic terms the sword is symbolic of a masculine stance rather than male domination or aggression. Bly explains that the divine cutter, or Logos, uses a sword to continuously divide the substance of the world: light from dark, earth from water, male from female. This ascribes a different set of associations from those of the traditional sword and emphasizes its creative function.

Even among the Arthurian heroes, the function of the sword comes closer to that of the non-traditional hero than does the phallic weapon of the traditional hero. Aragorn has the ancient sword of Elendil reforged after the discovery of the One Ring. The sword identifies him as the king and reinforces the patrilineal nature of his claim to the throne, but Aragorn also uses it in a demonstration of recognition and resolve. After Gandalf falls in battle against the Balrog in Moria, Aragorn bids farewell by raising his sword in salute to his fallen mentor. Later as the captains of Gondor plan the assault on Mordor, Aragorn raises his sword again, this time with the resolve not to rest until the last battle is fought. Two parallels appear in the *Prydain* series to this demonstration of resolve. Gwydion raises the black sword at the end of the first book and Math defies the Cauldron-Born before the gates of Caer Dathyl. A clear contrast to this resolve is Pryderi, who carries a naked sword into battle: one being founded in heroic resolve and the other in arrogance and bravado.

Patrilineal transmission is no less important in *The Farthest Shore*. Arren carries an ancient weapon handed down from father to son, but the sword of Morid can be drawn only in the service of life, and Arren remains uneasy with the lineage of the weapon, bearing it like a weight, until nearly the end of the book. Standing before the gap in the stones at the head of the dry river, the breach between the land of the living and the land of the dead, the Prince of Enlad, whose name means sword in the speech of the Archipelago, draws the sword against Cob, the "anti-king," the "un-maker." Cob, who calls himself king and lord, is renamed by Ged; the wound in the world is closed; and Arren, the true king of all Earthsea, carries Ged over the mountains into life.

Just as it does for Aragorn and Arren, the sword identifies who shall be king in Prydain, but the sword does not come to Taran by patrilineal descent. Only one of "noble worth" can draw Dyrnwyn at all, and all of Taran's lessons in humility and grief make him the rightful wielder of the blade. He is the American, democratic hero, the subversive force that will transform the aristocratic hegemony of Prydain.

The fall of the Cauldron-Born and the slaying of Arawn are the two events that mark Taran as a more traditional hero; nonetheless, Taran's leadership and compassion make him more than a hero of myth. Near the peak of Mount Dragon, the mountain that guards the entrance to the Land of Death, Taran slips from the path and clings to the side of the mountain, and as his own sword rips from his belt and clatters away, a gwythaint, one of the deadly birds of Arawn, seizes him as though to cast him down. But this bird is that very same bird a young Taran tried to help during the adventure of the Horned King, and like the hero of the folktale who is kind to animals, Taran is repaid in full for his efforts: the gwythaint pulls Taran from the cliff and sets him down on the summit of the mountain. Discovering the black sword under the stone at the very summit of Mount Dragon recalls both the beginning of the series and completes the adventure by fulfilling Hen Wen's prophecy. Just as Taran tries to draw the black sword in the face of the Horned King, he now draws the blade and strikes down the Cauldron-Born as one of the deathless warriors bears down on him:

> Now, heedless of the cost, seeing no more than a weapon come to his hand, he ripped the sword from its sheath. Dyrnwyn flamed with a white and blinding light. It was only then, in some distant corner of his mind, Taran dimly understood that Dyrnwyn was blazing in his grasp and that he was still alive. ... Taran leaped forward and with all his strength drove the blazing weapon deep into the warrior's heart. The Cauldron-Born stumbled and fell; and, from lips long mute burst a shriek that echoed and re-echoed from the Death-Lord's stronghold as though rising from a thousand tongues. ... Along the path and at the Iron Portals, the Cauldron warriors toppled as one body. ... Death at last had overcome the deathless Cauldron-Born. (262-63)

Taran is able to draw and use the sword, proving his worth and demonstrating the authority that has been granted him by the people of Prydain. Moreover, Taran slays the dark warrior, putting an end to that parody of warriorhood that seeks only to destroy life.

The slaying of the Death-Lord puts Taran in a similar position as when he defends himself from the cauldron-born, and he is less the hero of action than he is the saviour. The Death-Lord's transformation into a monstrous serpent places the scene into the context of a mythic battle between good and evil: "In an instant, the serpent coiled again; its eyes glittered with a cold, deadly flame. Hissing in rage, jaws gaping and fangs bared, the serpent shot forward, striking at Taran. ... Taran swung the flashing sword with all his strength. The blade clove the serpent in two" (273). Taran is the hero of myth, but he is also the American hero who liberates his people from the tyranny of evil. As the symbolic centre of evil, like the realm of Mordor in Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*, Annuvin collapses in upon itself and is destroyed.

On the one hand, Taran can be read as the traditional hero. He slays the monster and marries the princess. He and his phallic sword are victorious, and he is further successful in imposing his patriarchal ideologies on the land of Prydain. He is in the company of heroes such as Perseus, Beowulf, and Bard from Tolkien's *The Hobbit*. Taran, however, is not entirely Hourihan's traditional hero. His actions are guided by compassion, and he brings restoration, forgiveness, and centeredness.

v. Restoration and Integration

Taran's ascension to kingship involves both restoration and integration. As a blend of the traditional and non-traditional hero, Taran's choice to remain in Prydain is the expression of his integration, which has the effect of restoring the land from the ravages caused by Arawn. This restoration concludes the quest of the archetypal hero, as well as that of the Arthurian development novel. Following his apotheosis, the Campbellian hero returns to the world of common day and bestows the boon that will restore the community. For Lois Kuznets, the end of Arthurian development is similar to that of the return of the archetypal hero in that the hero brings about the restoration of the land with the destruction of evil. Taran's actions reflect both of these heroes, but more than this he asserts his own authority despite the social structure of Prydain, which in turn enables him to remain in Prydain and assume the burden of kingship.

Both Campbell and Kuznets identify the restoration that concludes the hero's quest, but in Campbell's monomyth, the final stage of the hero's journey is marked by the return. He divides this final stage into several steps: refusal of the return, or the world denied; the magic flight, or the escape of Prometheus; rescue from without; the crossing of the return threshold, or return to the world of common day; mastery of the two worlds;

and freedom to live, or the nature and function of the ultimate boon (36-37). The return often involves some resistance on the part of the hero who may not wish to leave the realm of the gods for the world of common day. The refusal of the return, therefore, is the hero's resistance to returning from the realm of the gods. But return he does, and he brings that boon that will restore the land to fertility. Fertility then becomes symbolic of the boon itself, which for Kuznets becomes the hero's reordering of the world that has become "chaotic and fallow under his aging and enfeebled father" (28).

For the Arthurian heroes, restoration is characterized by a new era of peace and fertility, which itself is the boon brought by the hero. Such a restoration is less evident in Le Guin, but the end of *The Farthest Shore* anticipates the peace to come. Ged and Arren return to the island of Roke on the back of the dragon Kalessin, and Ged kneels before Arren on the slopes of Roke Knoll, being the first to acknowledge him as king. In *The Lord of the Rings*, the reign of Aragorn is marked by the beginning of the fourth age in Middle-earth, the age of men. The impact on the landscape comes with the scouring of the Shire and the slow restoration of the idyllic Shire by Sam Gamgee, the gardener. He tramps up and down the Shire, painstakingly replanting trees in an attempt to restore the damage cause by Saruman, the former head of the White Council. The harvest of 1420, Shire reckoning, the fullest in recent memory, is the physical evidence of that restoration.

As it is for Tolkien and Le Guin, the restoration in Alexander is in the anticipation of what is to come, but the boon that Taran brings to Prydain is manifest in the lost secrets of husbandry and craftsmanship that Gurgi rescues from Annuvin before its destruction. Taran's rule will not be characterized by magic. The magical tools that Arawn stole from the people of Prydain are lost in the destruction of Annuvin, but Taran has the opportunity to bring about the restoration of Prydain with hard work and physical labour. In this way, he is much more the man of social practice than he is the hero of mythology. Taran is much more an "ironing John" than he is an Iron John.

What further sets Taran apart from his Arthurian counterparts is that he does not become king with the slaying of Arawn or even with the boon that will help him restore the kingdom; his choice to remain in Prydain and his rejection of immortality fulfill the prophecy from *The Book of Three*. Taran achieves the integration and centeredness that comes with the end of mythopoetic initiation, and the achievement of this integration makes him king. Kingship for Bly and Moore and Gillette represents the mature masculine in all its life-giving, generative form. For Bly, this integration comes in the young man's revelation of his identity to the king and the princess. At the end of "Iron John," the young man stands before the king and reveals himself to be the knight who wore the red, the white, and the black armour at the festival of the apples. The king acknowledges the young man and offers him anything in his power to give, recalling the same promise from the Wild Man himself. The young man asks for the hand of the princess in marriage, and she agrees wholeheartedly. The king's acknowledgment of the young man completes the young man's initiation, which further recalls the end of the Arthurian development novel, in which the hero is acknowledged with the end of his quest. During the wedding feast, the young man's parents enter, and Iron John himself arrives, no longer the Wild Man of the forest, but a baronial lord, who comes to bestow his blessing upon the young man. With no fewer than three kings in attendance, the young man receives the blessing that will enable him to become a king in his own right, and such a blessing is necessary for the new king to bestow the same upon his people and his kingdom.

Although popular in approach, Moore and Gillette's comments on the king archetype and men are equally applicable to a hero of fantasy such as Taran. The king recognizes and lives according to an inner authority; he is merciful and compassionate and bestows his blessing upon those within his sphere of influence. The king archetype, or what they call the mature masculine energy, is thus the ordering principle of the world:

> The King archetype in its fullness possesses the qualities of order, of reasonable and rational patterning, of integration and integrity in the masculine psyche. It stabilizes chaotic emotion and out-of-control behaviours. It gives stability and centeredness. It brings calm. And in its "fertilizing" and centeredness, it mediates vitality, life-force, and joy. It brings maintenance and balance. It defends our own sense of inner order, our own integrity of being and of purpose, our own central calmness about who we are, and our essential unassailability and certainty in our masculine identity. (62-63)

The responsibility of the king, therefore, is to act as a conduit for this archetypal energy, as opposed to possessing it, which is manifest in the shadow form of the king as either the tyrant or the weakling. The tyrant is concerned only with satisfying his needs at the expense of the kingdom, while the weakling is no less tragic. Moore and Gillette suggest that the grandiosity of the weakling prince can assert itself in the man, exploding to the surface in all of its raw power, and making the normally passive man act as a "little Hitler."

Just as Bly presents the possibility of getting in touch with the energy of the Wild Man, Moore and Gillette present the possibility of getting in touch with the king. The weakness here, as with Bly, is the difficulty in making such archetypes part of a social practice. If the king archetype is the ordering principle of the world, then this ordering principle necessarily remains patriarchal and exclusive. However, the intent is to transfer the positive qualities of this metaphorical construct to men's lived experience and for men to change the ways in which they behave toward family, women, and children.

For the Arthurian heroes, this metaphorical construct is relevant, and kingship itself marks the fruition of the struggle. This is most apparent for Aragorn and Arren, both of whom are crowned at the end of their respective quests. Aragorn's revelation, with the appearance of the One Ring as the heir of Isildur, means that he will ascend to his throne with the ring's destruction. Even after the people of Minas Tirith recognize Aragorn as the king, he refuses to make a claim to the kingship, leaving the city in the hands of the steward, and marching with the Lords of Gondor on the Black Gate of Mordor, a refusal that seems like remarkable restraint. Aragorn is no more interested in creating dissension among the people of Gondor than he is content to wait for another assault from the Dark Tower.

Arren of Le Guin's *The Farthest Shore* is more like Taran than Aragorn in that Arren has no idea that he is being prepared to become the next king of Earthsea. He is led by Ged across the land of the dead, and it is Arren who finds their way after Ged has spent his power in the fight against Cob, and in closing the wound between the land of death and the land of the living. A gap in the cliff at the head of the dry river, an open wound between the land of the living and thaat of the dead, forms an interesting parallel to the wounds described by Bly; the wound is physical, but it is emblematic of the loss of centeredness in the land of Earthsea. After Ged spends his power and strength to close the wound between the worlds, Arren carries Ged up into the Mountains of Pain and back to the land of the living, the last shore of Earthsea where his and Ged's physical bodies lie in the sun on the beach. The wound is closed and Arren fulfils the prophecy of Maharion: "'He shall inherit my throne who has crossed the dark land living and come to the far shores of the day'" (25). Like Aragorn and Arren, Taran's coming to kingship fulfils a prophecy, which in his case comes from *The Book of Three*.

Taran is not immediately crowned High King of Prydain, even though he is able to draw the sword and slay the Death-Lord. His grief, that quality characteristic of maturity, keeps him bound to Prydain. At the end of the series, the rest of the companions are about to take ship for the Summer Country, a land of perpetual youth and joy from whence the Sons of Don first came to the succour of the people of Prydain. Taran has a place among them, but his grief and his memory of those who fought and died will not allow him to leave the place that has cost so much in blood:

> "There are those more deserving of your gift than I, yet never may it be offered them. My life is bound to theirs. Coll Son of Collfrewr's garden and orchard lie barren, waiting for a hand to quicken them. My skill is less than his, but I give it willingly for his sake. The seawall at Dinas Rhydnant is unfinished, ... Before the King of Mona's burial mound I vowed not to leave his task undone. ... Shall I forget Annlaw Clay-shaper? Commot Merin and others like it? ...Yet if it is in my power to rebuild even a little of what has been broken, this must I do." (290)

Taran is bound to Prydain by his "double heart," and his decision to remain reshapes the social structure of Prydain. The grief he has experienced over the five books, especially the last, and the vows he has made to heal the hurts inflicted by Arawn identify him as a non-traditional hero, one who has suffered for the sake of others. Unlike his Arthurian counterparts, Taran does not inherit a kingdom; he does not have a lineage as either Aragorn or Arren does. The prophecy in *The Book of Three* states that the next High King of Prydain will be one of "no station in life" (294), "one who slew a serpent, who gained and lost a flaming sword, who chose a kingdom of sorrow over a kingdom of happiness"

(294).

There are two ways to read Alexander's use of this prophecy. First, Alexander is attempting to subvert yet one more aspect of the journey of the traditional hero. He withholds the prophecy until Taran has made his choices in order to emphasize Taran's democratization and downplay any primacy of class or of patrilineal descent. Aragorn, Arren, and Arthur himself are essentially products of destiny, and patriarchal, upper class products at that. Taran, on the other hand, is Michael Kimmel's American Self-Made Man, and as Norma Bagnall says, like any boy in America, he can grow up to be president. Such a reading favours the American nature of Alexander's series, but it does not do justice to the series as a whole, or to Taran's initiation into kingship. The second reading, then, recognizes that Taran makes the decision to remain and *why* he accepts the suffering and the mortality that goes along with the role of High King of Prydain. All of Taran's experiences speak to a slow process of initiation: the wounding, the failure, the privation, as well as the encounters with the mentor, with other men, with the feminine, and the father give Taran the compassionate heart of the king. In the words of Dallben, "For the deeds of a man, not the words of a prophecy, are what shape his destiny" (293). Both initiation and social interaction bring maturity, and with maturity comes a compassionate heart; and so it is for Taran, as he is named High King by Dallben and steps out before the cottage with Eilonwy to stand before his people.

Myth and social interaction come together in the restoration of the land, and the physical restoration of the land is, in turn, emblematic of kingship itself. More than the other Arthurians, Taran embodies a masculine concern for centeredness, and his determination to heal the ravages of Arawn look forward to a new vision of masculinity that has, at its heart, a concern for community, for nurturance, and for the environment. In *Fire in the Belly: On Being a Man*, Sam Keen calls this stewardship of the land an "ecological commonwealth," in which the new masculinity embodies care for the world in which we live, which itself becomes the inheritance of the generations to come.

As a hero of fantasy, Taran embodies many of the attributes of the traditional hero, while distinguishing himself as a leader. The boon that Taran brings to the people of Prydain is his willingness to remain and take on the burden of rule. Much of his experience speaks to social interaction and an American or democratic development, especially in terms of the means by which he comes to kingship. More than this, Taran is an Arthurian and a non-traditional hero. From a mythopoetic perspective, initiation is a slow inward spiral, moving inexorably toward grief and woundedness, and kingship is the fruition of the process, the metaphorical expression of centeredness. For Taran, the symbolically realized centre of Prydain is and always has been the cottage at Caer Dallben, the place from which he begins his adventures and one to which he returns. Location here is imperative. The farm and its cultivation will keep Taran grounded in his experience of initiation and his authority derived from the people of Prydain. Grief remains at the core of Taran's decision to stay, and his compassion binds him to the land and to its people.

Taran is indeed a heroic hybrid. The ritualistic, the archetypal, and the mythopoetic models come together in Taran to create a hero who is not, in the end, driven by power or aggression or social class, and who operates against the existing hegemony. His obsession with birth and worth colours much of the series, but the wound and the meeting with the father bring him to a new understanding of his own worth. The words "only thou of noble worth" are inscribed on the black sword, and it is fitting that Taran discovers the full inscription on the sword only after he has slain Arawn.

Taran is one of the heroes of fantasy to emerge out of the middle of the twentieth century who falls within the definition of Arthurian development, but he also undergoes the experience of woundedness and testing at the core of the initiation process, whether it be ritualistic, archetypal, or mythopoetic. More than this, he is a hero who encounters multiple masculinities within a social context, and his character moves beyond the bounds of fantasy to speak directly to the experience of men. He is a king, but he is also a steward and protector. He is exactly one of the heroes whom Keen identifies as those needed to guide the world into the future. Even as a hero of fantasy, Taran is one of Keen's "now and future men":

> When men centre their concerns about masculinity on their genitals, on making money, on accumulating power, or even on exploring their "feminine" side, they trivialize manhood. First and foremost, the vocation of now and future men is to

> become gentle and earthy. We can have justifiable pride only if we face the monumental issue of changing the social and psychological systems that have brought us to the edge of degradation. How can we stand tall and rejoice in our strength if we do not become earth-honouring? How can we respect ourselves if we do not care enough to husband and pass on the heritage of earth's fullness to our children? (120)

It is this vision of masculinity in relation to social change that helps to form a bridge between the mythopoetic approach and recent critical men's studies. As Connell points out in *The Men and the Boys*, concerns for violence, the environment, and world peace rely on the challenge to the existing hegemonic masculinity:

> Masculinities are the forms in which many dynamics of violence take shape. Evidently, then, strategy for peace must include a strategy of change in masculinities. This is the new dimension in peace work which studies of men suggest: contesting the hegemony of masculinities which emphasize violence, confrontation and domination, replacing them with patterns of masculinity more open to negotiation, cooperation and equality. (224)

Kingship for Taran is about masculine centeredness, but also about responsibility, equality, and obligation. Out of myth and out of story, Taran the High King of Prydain finds a form of masculinity that fuses myth, literature, social practice, and experience into a moral vision of manhood.

Conclusion

Lloyd Alexander's *Prydain* series constitutes a literary model of initiation that spans the five books in the series. Masculinity and gender relations are crucial to Taran's development and represent those aspects of his initiation that set him apart as a non-traditional hero of fantasy. The ritualistic, archetypal, and mythopoetic models of initiation all inform Taran's development to varying degrees, but the mythopoetic model brings forward issues specific to masculinity and male development. The position of Prydain's aristocratic hegemony and the violence and competition of those complicit in that hegemony further characterize the masculine nature of the form. The male mentor, grief and woundedness, and environmental stewardship are all aspects of Taran's initiation that make it specific to a masculine process, but social interaction and gender relations are those aspects that prove Taran to be a new kind of hero. Bearing in mind these aspects of masculinity and gender relations and considering each of the five books as a necessary stage in his initiation, we can see how Taran steps outside the paradigm of the traditional hero in a process whereby he challenges the aristocratic hegemony of Prydain and that moves him from boy to man and from Pig-Keeper to High King.

The three-part structure of Taran's initiation – the separation, the road of trials, and the ascension to kingship – represents a literary variation on these initiatory models. Taran's initial separation from Caer Dallben is the symbolic point of severance from home, from what is familiar, and from the security of the farm. His road of trials encompasses the public arena of men and warriors, the discovery of desire and the encounter with the feminine, and the search for and meeting with the father. The world of men and warriors introduces Taran more fully to the aristocratic hegemony of Prydain, where he learns that manhood is measured against other men through shame and competition. The encounter with the feminine has Taran meeting women in both a social and an archetypal context. He becomes the desiring subject with the princess as the object of that desire, which has the effect of further marginalizing him from the aristocracy. The confrontation with the father is the central point of Taran's initiation and brings him face to face with the shame of being the son of a herdsman; it brings his sense of woundedness and entrapment to the fore and forces him to give up his dream of being nobly born, after which he discovers a new sense of authority among the folk of the Free Commots. The ascension to kingship is the resolution of Taran's initiation, in which he is authorized as a war leader by both the hegemony and the people of Prydain. He finds the sword and slays the monster, but becomes high king of Prydain only after he chooses to remain behind and assume the responsibility for the land and its people.

The degree to which each of the three initiatory models informs Taran's development varies from book to book, but both the ritualistic and archetypal models serve to reinforce the nature of Taran's initiation as a traditional hero. With its focus on severance and wounding, the ritualistic model identifies the importance of a literal movement out of childhood and away from the mother. Brian du Toit, Mircea Eliade, and Joseph Campbell all describe rituals of physical wounding such as circumcision, whereby the initiate is literally cut away from home and from mother. Such severance in ritual practice becomes separation or departure for Taran and his Arthurian counterparts, what Joseph Campbell calls the hero's separation, the first stage in his three-part structure of the monomyth. The period of testing is that period of physical privation for the initiate in ritual practice, which for Campbell forms the core of his archetypal model.

Given that the penultimate moment in the initiation of Campbell's hero is the meeting with the father, it is possible to see how Alexander's hero undergoes a similar process. Both models further emphasize Taran's development as an Arthurian hero, a fact which adds another layer to the reading of Taran's character as more traditional. His literary counterparts, such as Aragorn from Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* and Arren from Le Guin's *The Farthest Shore,* experience a process of development particular to the legendary king, but which also incorporates stages of separation and testing, as well as an encounter with the father. In spite of the degree to which Taran's initiation is informed by ritual practice and the journey of the archetypal hero, some of the principal deviations from these models point to the Americanness of the series, as well as to those issues central to masculinity and gender relations. Stott's assessment of Taran as a democratic hero explains some of these deviations, especially Taran's rallying of the Commot folk and his lack of a birthright through to the end of the series. Bagnall also identifies Taran as an American, self-made hero, but Kimmel's comments on the Self-Made Man in nineteenth-century America contribute to a reading of Taran's character in the context of the competition between men in a public arena. Apart from this reading, most of Alexander's critics do not account for the tension between Taran's democratization as a hero and a literary form that is grounded in British values and a British class structure. It is this structure that becomes what Connell calls hegemonic masculinity, the centre of power in Prydain by which Taran is both authorized and marginalized. In spite of Taran's Americanness and his relationship to the hegemony, his actions through to the end of the series speak to those of the traditional hero. As Hourihan and Kuznets point out, the traditional hero story is a construct based on ideological dualisms that forefront patriarchal concerns. If we stop here, Taran, American or not, remains a traditional hero, a patriarchal construct who kills the monster and marries the princess.

Taran, however, is not limited by such dualisms. Alexander is, in fact, writing an American variation on the traditional hero story, but he is also writing about the social relationships that define manhood and the crossing of a threshold into a public arena where Taran constructs himself according to the other characters he meets. His experience of grief and woundedness speaks to the mythopoetic nature of his initiation: separating from home, meeting the mentor, experiencing the sacred space, entering the world of men and warriors, experiencing the erotic and a connection to the natural world, confronting the father, finding himself nameless, and achieving the double heart of maturity. His relationship to Prydain's aristocratic hegemony and his understanding of manhood and heroism in a social context further masculinize Taran's initiation, making it no less than a literary and social variation of the process. Taran's initiation re-writes the traditional hero story, resulting in a new paradigm that focuses on social relation rather than isolation, on apprenticeship rather than conquest, on emotional maturity rather than domination and control. From the standpoint of the mythopoetic model, the figure of Robert Bly's Wild Man is most notable in Taran's initiation. The Iron John story graphically portrays the figure of the mentor or male mother. The Wild Man is like the figure of the guide from Campbell's monomyth; he is the guide, the initiating priest, the wise old man, and even suggests the animal helper out of myth and folktale. But the Wild Man is not the generic helper of the folktale. He appears precisely at that moment when Bly's initiate is ready to move from the mother's realm into the father's, and is thus a necessary element in bringing the initiate across the threshold into manhood. Taran only indirectly meets this metaphorical figure: he encounters aspects of the Wild Man in the mentors he meets and the grief he experiences. Nevertheless, Taran's initiation is not confined to a meeting with the Wild Man. Both Connell and Kimmel insist that the essentialism of the mythopoetic men's movement is limiting as an approach to masculinity studies. Masculinities emerge from a social context and must be read in a multiplicity of forms, and this is precisely what happens to Taran in his relationships with the characters he meets and his challenge to the aristocratic hegemony of Prydain. The mythopoetic approach postulates a masculine process of initiation that brings together myth and ritual with the experience of contemporary manhood. Its application to a literary character such as Taran is possible because of the ways in which the hero story reaches back to the same sources. Bly, Meade, Keen, as well as Moore and Gillette, all look to these ancient stories to inform the experience of manhood. While Alexander's concern for story is obvious, he is equally aware of how story both defines and explains human psychological and emotional processes, and how myth and archetype impact a literary form such as heroic fantasy. If we add to this masculinity as a social construct, we have a hero of fantasy who operates as a subversive force within a traditional form. In this way, the hero story, more specifically the initiation story, becomes the intersecting point between what is fundamentally a cultural concern and a literary fantasy. Contributing a social context to Taran's initiation helps to complete the process by which he ascends to kingship. It also represents a radical departure in terms of the hero story, not only in the process by which Taran becomes king of Prydain, but also in the vision of community, moral responsibility, and environmental stewardship that concludes the series.

Works Cited

Alexander, Lloyd. *Time Cat*. New York: Dell, 1963.

---. *The Book of Three*. New York: Dell, 1964.

---. *The Black Cauldron*. New York: Dell, 1965.

---. *The Castle of Llyr*. New York: Dell, 1966.

---. *Taran Wanderer*. New York: Dell, 1967.

---. *The High King*. New York: Dell, 1968.

---. *The Marvelous Misadventures of Sebastian*. New York: Dutton, 1970.

---. *The Foundling and Other Tales of Prydain*. New York: Dell, 1973.

---. *The Cat Who Wished to be a Man.* New York: Dutton, 1973.

---. *The Wizard in the Tree*. New York: Dell, 1975.

---. *The Town Cats and Other Tales*. Ill. Laszlo Kubinyi. New York: Dell, 1977.

---. *The First Two Lives of Lukas-Kasha.* New York: Dutton, 1978.

---. Foreword. Tymn, Marshall B., Kenneth J. Zahorski, and Robert H. Boyer. *Fantasy Literature: A Core Collection and Reference Guide*. New York: R. R. Bowker, 1979. vii-x

---. *Westmark.* New York: Dutton, 1981.

---. "The Grammar of Story." *Celebrating Children's Books: Essays on Children's Literature in Honor of Zena Sutherland.* Eds. Betsy Hearne and Kaye Marilyn. New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard, 1981. 3-13

---. *The Kestrel*. New York: Dell, 1982.

---. *The Beggar Queen*. New York: Dutton, 1984.

---. *The Illyrian Adventure*. New York: Dell, 1986.

---. *The El Dorado Adventure*. New York: Dutton, 1987.

---. *The Drackenberg Adventure*. New York: Dutton, 1988.

---. *The Jedera Adventure*. New York:, Dell, 1989.

---. *The Arkadians.* New York: Puffin Books, 1995.

---. *The Iron Ring*. New York: Dutton Children's Books, 1997.

Bagnall, Norma. "An American Hero in Welsh Fantasy: The Mabinogion, Alan Garner and Lloyd Alexander." *The New Welsh Review* 2.4 (1990): 26-29.

Baxter, Kent. “Desire and the Literary Machine: Capitalism, Male Sexuality, and Stratemeyer Series Books for Boys.” *Men and Masculinities* 3.2 (2000): 168-186.

Bly, Robert. *Iron John: A Book About Men*. Reading, Mass: Addison-Wesley, 1990.

Campbell, Joseph. *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. 2nd ed. Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1968.

Carter, Lin. *Imaginary Worlds: The Art of Fantasy*. New York: Ballantine, 1973.

Connell, Robert W. “The Big Picture: Masculinities in Recent World History.” *Theory and Society* 22.5 (1993): 597-623.

---. *The Men and the Boys*. California: U of California P, 2000.

---. “The Social Structure of Masculinity.” *The Masculinities Reader*. Eds. Stephen Whitehead and Frank J. Barrett. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2001.

Cooper, Susan. *The Grey King*. New York: Atheneum, 1975.

---. *The Dark is Rising*. New York: Collier Books, 1986.

Du Toit, Brian M. *Configurations of Cultural Continuity*. Rotterdam: Balkema, 1976.

Eliade, Mircea. *Rites and Symbols of Initiation: The Mysteries of Birth and Rebirth*. New York: Harper and Row, 1975.

Frye, Northrop. "Archetypal Criticism: Theory of Myths." *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1957. 131-242.

---. *The Secular Scripture; A Study of the Structure of Romance*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1976.

Gantz, Jeffrey. Trans. *The Mabonogion*. New York: Penguin, 1976.

Garner, Alan. *The Owl Service*. London: Lions, 1973.

Helson, Ravenna. "Fantasy and Self-Discovery.” *The Horn Book Magazine*, April 1970. 121-133.

Hourihan, Margery. *Deconstructing the Hero: Literary Theory and Children's Literature*. London: Routledge, 1997.

Keen, Sam. *Fire in the Belly: On Being a Man*. New York: Bantam, 1991.

Kimmel, Michael. “The New Men’s Movement: Retreat and Regression with America’s Weekend Warriors.” *Feminist Issues* 13.2 (1993): 3-19.

---. *Manhood in America*: A Cultural History. New York: The Free Press Division of

Scribner and Sons, 1996.

---. "Masculinity as Homophobia: Fear, Shame, and Silence in the Construction of Gender Identity." *The Masculinities Reader*. Stephen M. Whitehead and Frank J. Barrett. Eds. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2001.

Kuznets, Lois R. "'High Fantasy' in America: A Study of Lloyd Alexander, Ursula Le Guin, and Susan Cooper." *The Lion and the Unicorn: A Critical Journal of Children's Literature* 9 (1985): 19-35.

Lane, Elizabeth. "Lloyd Alexander's Chronicles of Prydain & the Welsh Tradition." *E. J. R. R. Tolkien Society* 7 (1973): 25-28.

Le Guin. *A Wizard of Earthsea*. First Ed. Parnassus, 1968. Toronto: Puffin Books, 1971.

---. *The Farthest Shore*. Toronto: Bantam, 1975.

Mallory, Thomas. Le The Morte d'Arthur. Project Gutenberg. Ed. Mike Lough. July 2004. http://www.gutenberg.net/etext98/1mart10.txt

May, Jill P. *Lloyd Alexander*. Boston: Twayne, 1991.

McGillis, Roderick. *The Nimble Reader*. New York: Twayne, 1996.

McKillip, Patricia. *The Riddle-Master of Hed*. New York: Ballantine, 1976.

Meade, Michael. *Men and the Water of Life: Initiation and the Tempering of Men*. New York: Harper Collins, 1993.

Mitchell, Judith N. "The Boy Who Would Be King." *Journal of Popular Culture* 17.4 (1984): 134-137

Moore, Robert, and Douglas Gillette. *King, Warrior, Magician, Lover: Rediscovering the Archetypes of the Mature Masculine*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1990

Raglan, Lord. *The Hero: A Study in Tradition, Myth, and Drama*. London: Watts, 1949.

Rank, Otto. *The Myth of the Birth of the Hero: a Psychological Interpretation of Mythology*. Trans. F. Robbins and Smith Ely Jelliffe. New York: R. Brunner, 1952.

Stott, Jon C. "Alexander's Chronicles of Prydain: The Nature of Beginnings." Ed. Perry Nodelman. *Touchstones: Reflections on the Best in Children's Literature*. Vol. One. West Lafayette: Children's Lit. Assoc., 1985. 21-29.

Sutcliff, Rosemary. *The Sword at Sunset*. London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1963.

Swinfen, Ann. *In Defence of Fantasy: A Study of the Genre in English and American Literature Since 1945*. London: Routledge, 1984.

Tolkien, J. R. R. "On Faerie-Stories." *The Tolkien Reader*. New York: Ballantine, 1966. 33-99.

---. *The Lord of the Rings*. London: Harper Collins, 1991.

---. *The Fellowship of the Ring*. London: Harper Collins, 1991.

---. *The Two Towers*. London: Harper Collins, 1991.

---. *The Return of the King*. London: Harper Collins, 1991.

---. *The Hobbit*. 2nd Ed. London: Harper Collins, 1995.

Tymn, Marshall B., Kenneth J. Zahorski, and Robert H. Boyer. *Fantasy Literature: A Core Collection and Reference Guide*. New York: R. R. Bowker, 1979.

Waggoner, Diana. "Lloyd Alexander." Bleiler, Everett, Franklin. Ed. *Supernatural Fiction Writers: Fantasy and Horror: A. E. Coppard to Roger Zelazny*. New York: Scribner's, 1985. 965-71

West, Richard C. "The Tolkinians: Some Introductory Reflections on Alan Garner, Carol Kendall, and Lloyd Alexander." *Orcrist: Bulletin of the University of Wisconsin J. R. R. Tolkien Society* 2 (1967-68): 4-15.

Weston, Jessie L. *From Ritual to Romance*. New York: Double Day, 1957.

White, T. H. *The Once and Future King*. London: Harper Collins, 1996.

Zahorski, Kenneth J. and Robert H. Boyer. *Lloyd Alexander, Evangeline Walton Ensley, Kenneth Morris: A Primary and Secondary Bibliography*. Boston: Hall, 1981.